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TROPICANIA

BY

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I.

IT occurs to me, Thomas Ryerson, that I have a story to tell, and that I can tell it after a fashion.

The most important happening in my life, as I see it now, was a certain interview with Mary Galbraith. I had come in from Alaska a few weeks before, penniless but undismayed, feeling fit for any fate, and as pleased with myself and the world as if I had led back a mule-pack laden with golden globules. . . . My boyhood home overlooks Lake Superior from the south shore, and the cool, clean Michigan town, so queerly ordered and half-civilized, was happily stimulating after years prodigally spent in the desolate north. There, for the summer, was Mary Galbraith. We walked and rode and bantered and waltzed and dreamed and fished for three inspiriting months. No finer, deeper, nor fuller days were ever given a man. I had not known that anything could be quite so important.

Something about her at first told me that here was a woman with whom a man must be just *himself*, if he would prosper. So she saw me ungloved, and my mind in its every-day working garb. Always I was lifted, strangely lifted, when we were together, but never out of myself. I wish I could suggest in a line or two the great mystery of her.

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VOL. XCI.—I

Sometimes I caught myself thinking, in the midst of a long day together, that we had been companions for years, and had not grown tired a single moment. She seemed to make me over anew each day. The first glance of her in the morning, some profile-inspiration, some new charm in what she said or wore, arranged the day and adjusted me to a pitch in the creative scheme, different always from yesterday and never exactly to be duplicated. . . . That last night together, I told Mary Galbraith I loved her, though it could n't possibly have been news.

"I thought you would say that to-night, Tom," she "said.

"And what comes of it?" I asked her.

"I think you are fine and natural—the nearest to a real man I've ever met, and I won't forget you."

"You mean," I said, and I felt as if I were being shut for all time in a place where dead men lay, "that you are going to give yourself a chance to forget me?"

She began slowly to say things: "We've had great days together. Every day was in its place. It is the sort of time—that will look finer and more wonderful from a distance. I'm going to give it the chance. . . . I don't believe women take seriously enough the matter of choosing who will be their dearest among men. I don't want to make any mistake, and I don't want you to."

"I see," said I, and warm, vital air was about my world again.

"There was a look in your eyes, Tom," she went on, "that I did n't like when I saw you first. Perhaps it is n't in the eyes, but in the lines about them, or in the laugh. I don't believe it was there in your boy-years. I can't see it any more, because we've been together so much, but I'm not sure it is gone. I'm not going to tell you what it is—nor my theory of what caused it. . . . But in a year I'll know—if it's gone."

"Mary," I said, after a moment, "is n't there anything that you care to tell me, about this long, lean year—how I'm to bring back what you want?"

"No. . . . It's so important for you to bring it back—all of your own doing."

"I should have needed a year, any way," said I. "You know I have got to bring back the—the fire-wood and the antelope—to your tepee."

"I tell you that has n't anything to do with the other thing I want—"

"Does n't it really mean anything to you—that you are rich and I poor-for-the-present?"

"Have n't I shown you that it does n't, Tom?"

"Yes, but I like to hear you say it."

"It doesn't really mean anything to me," she said decisively. "Why, if that were all, we could go out now together and get firewood and antelopes—and forget that I had anything like enough in my own right. We are well and strong. Oh, that's so simple—"

"Yet it's like a rope around the throat of the race," said I.

"And men hang upon it—until they are dead," she finished.

I seemed to see a boy and a girl hand-in-hand, setting out in search of the end of the rainbow. There was always that about her to bewitch me—her touches in the minor key. . . . We stood upon the rocky shore of Superior—a pine forest on our right hand, and on the left, that cold, fresh sea, always sounding. . . . And I said it again, "I love you, Mary Galbraith."

In the heart of man, it seemed to me, there could n't be more reality to put into those words.

When it was very clear that I was not to see Mary Galbraith again until a year had passed, I told her I should spend the year in South America. I could not see her face, for she had turned it from the starlight. She made no answer. The inky darkness of the forest into which she stared had gathered about her features. Yet I felt some strange disorder as the seconds passed, and finally I asked:

"Can't one get what you want in South America—as well as any other place?"

"South America means a man's dream of rivers of gold to me," she said slowly.

This was exactly what it meant to me—who had failed in Alaska.

"My mother and I learned—what the dream of rivers of gold will do to the mind of a husband and father," she added.

"But this is just for a year, dear Mary. The dream to me is what I may bring back to you. And wherever I am, thinking of you in my nights and days must put into my eyes—the thing you wish to see when I come home to you."

"You make it hard to let you go," she said unsteadily. . . . It was the only time she wavered. The moment was memorable. All about me was the warmth and strength of her emotions.

"A man in love will be anything a woman asks of him," I added.

"Yes, yes," she said quickly. "That's just it. Only, she must be wiser, and she must keep the man in love. People should n't relax and get used to happiness after they join together. . . . But I'll say no more. . . . Only, I must tell you that my father is in South America! . . . Yes, a man can get what he wants in South America, even though rivers of gold are there, if—but I must be careful and not give away my secret—"

"If he loves enough," I finished.

"How strange of you to say that—coming from those other rivers of gold in the north!"

"But, Mary, I have been three months with you."

"How dear you are to me! . . ."

II.

If you have a map of the Americas on your wall, drive a pin into New York City, and drop a string from it. Falling naturally, the string will cut off a small, extremely western strip of South America that bulges out into the Pacific.

This little strip contains many properties wonderful to me: the highest mountains of the hemisphere; mountain-lakes that only the mid-day sun finds, and which live in a sort of dim enchantment mornings and afternoons; rivers that rush and leap and cut deep, silent ways to the sea; a rocky, serrated coast overlooking the Pacific; torrid, temperate, and frigid climate all in a day's climb; one river, the Rio Calderon, which the devil baited with gold to catch men; a ruined city—and the radiant valley, Tropicania. To this valley, through which runs the golden Calderon, came war, strategy, a complicated system of espionage, friends, foes, fortunes, beggary, ambition, dissolution, love.

. . . For me in everything and everywhere—in the nights and mornings, in the heights and gorges, by river and shore—was present the vision of a woman. And it is true that certain women found their way to the valley.

It must not be imagined that I reached Tropicania with ease; nor that I got into the heart of things there lightly—even after I reached Libertad, which is a little town on the slope of Mount Moloch, one of the hugest masses of the Andes, and a few miles to the north, overlooking the valley of Tropicania. As bad a town, this Libertad, as ever our West or Far North knew, but more quiet about it, as befits a place where sin is of age.

I heard first of Galbraith, "the old Master"—and my heart thrilled at the name—on the ship going down from Panama to Guayaquil. With the pack-trains journeying southeast for two days, en route to Libertad, there was little news, but many stories: how Galbraith had promoted gold-wars around the world, and once tried to sell a brood of torpedo-destroyers to Japan. One old prospector remarked that he'd rather contract to get the Ark of the Covenant away from the Children of Israel, than this river property from Nick Galbraith. Also, I heard that Galbraith was a fiend and a friend—a fire-eater, a fool, a king, and a wizard. Out of it all, I discerned that I must find out for myself.

I reached the town of Libertad in the dusk of evening. The town

sat upon a mountain-side, and Moloch's glacier was white with the early moon. I heard the restless voices of the miners—as I had heard them in the North with terrible gales beating about little shacks, whose every crevice was red with fire-light. And here, from the valley of Tropicania, came a soft, warm wind, fragrant as from orchard lands.

. . . . Mary Galbraith's father was down in that valley, with an army barking around him, or tearing at his flanks, for all I knew. I felt it would be a good thing to serve the old Master.

Everything I had heard so far led to the fact that I could n't join Galbraith simply by going down into the valley. Vivera, a native leader, had cut off the American gold-seeker from Libertad. He was gathering to strike again, it was said, while Galbraith was spread out over the ten miles between his headquarters and the sea. . . . “Why is he spread out so?” I asked myself again and again. . . .

The hotel at Libertad was a broad, low, stucco affair, an ancient Spanish setting for a life as new and raw as the tented wildernesses of North American El Dorados. It was the balcony that saved the situation—the only feature not named in the price-lists—and the most desirable. Old leisurely Spain had built it—Spanish soldiers and their women had doubtless sung there. There was a partition in the balcony, but I heard occasionally the voices of a woman and a man in the room to the right. . . .

At supper I met Dickson, whom I had seen somewhere before. He caught me studying him. Perhaps it was his nervousness that made him introduce himself. From talk with Dickson and others, it became clear that I must not ask questions too freely. Vivera sympathizers were strong in Libertad. Their sympathy was based on the conviction that he would whip Galbraith in the end. Wherever sentiment entered, it was for the gold-king, whose history challenged the adventurous heart. The ebb and flow of his fortunes had altered great money-centres. When Galbraith was whipped, it took an army or a parliament.

These large sayings held my thought as I sat on the balcony, occasionally roused from them by the murmur of voices in the next room. At length a tap drew me to the door, and I admitted Dickson. His figure was small and slender, but the voice deep and desirable.

“We're in the next room,” he explained, “and have been shut up for several days. Mrs. Dickson will be glad to see an American——”

He opened the door, and I saw the woman, smiling, within. “This is the little girl, Mr. Ryerson,” he said half humorously, “who declared she never would get tired of me.”

“I don't want to,” she broke in. “I'm used—I'm used to a big family. . . . We've been shut up here for five days and nights——”

“'Sh-sh!”

“I know, but we really should see some one else,” she went on, in a

slightly lowered voice. "You'll tire of me. Two people exhaust each other. I don't want to get so that I know always what you're going to do and say next."

This interchange shared my absorption in the woman herself, as she moved to and fro in the lamp-rays. She had a fair, frank face—a blonde woman with wide, blue eyes and full red lips. Her ears, which I instinctively look at, were lost in rolls of hair. She looked physically paramount, and yet square in the sense of its being unnatural for her to lie. The thought came to me that here was a natural outlaw—a woman dangerous only when shut up.

My first thought of Dickson had been that he was somewhat insignificant to carry such an elegant manner. His voice was out of proportion to his weight—deep, cultured utterances which made my eyes look over his head. My mind was deeply active, trying to trace where I had seen him. A face is always harder to discern in a dim light than dead objects. . . . This room was more livable than mine. A touch of the woman's hand was here and there.

He lit a cigarette, and I turned with the flare. His face was deeply, tensely lined; small, but not paltry; it was not exactly a gamester's face, but a gentleman's, in the sense of being well-bred. The whole had come forth with strange vividness in the slow flame of the match. Then the flash—that I had seen Dickson's face in a newspaper, associated with the loss of a great sum of money—one of the wanted. . . . I heard their voices vaguely for a moment; saw Dickson regarding me keenly.

Talk waned after that, except from the woman. The wine made her delightfully communicative, but Dickson again and again interposed in his gentle, humorous way. I liked and pitied him.

They were waiting in Libertad for a chance to get down into Tropicana. The daily danger of battle between Vivera and Galbraith's defenders was responsible for their delay. Dickson remarked that the settlement of Tropicana was worth trying for, by a man who wanted to make a fortune.

"It's just my kind of an adventure, if we can only get there," the woman said.

"If Galbraith is definitely whipped," Dickson added, "the valley will be wide open; but with the old Master out of the way and Vivera holding the river—the chance of making a big winning will be closed."

I told them that I had come to Libertad on the way to the valley, and presently I pleaded an overpowering drowsiness, and arose to retire. The woman asked me to remain longer, and I saw that Dickson was dismayed at the thought of my passing from sight. . . . I wished I could make him see in some way that I had no pecuniary interest in his past.

III.

I COULD N'T find heart to hang up in Libertad and await a battle that might decide the fate of Tropicania or even end the life of Mary Galbraith's father. An idea suggested itself: to make my way westward from Libertad to the ocean—a distance of eighteen miles—and to obtain a small boat to take me down the coast to the mouth of the Calderon, and the outposts of Galbraith. It was the only way to avoid the lines of Vivera, which stretched between Mount Moloch to the west, closing every trail to Tropicania. . . .

Of course, it was clear to me by this time why Galbraith suffered himself to be strung out, when he might have kept a compact force around his river-property indefinitely. Only a ship-load of rifles and ammunition could make him take a chance like this. Perhaps he was running close on these essentials—and yet it did n't seem to me that he would invest a million in mining machinery, and provide only enough gun-metal for a few skirmishes.

Dickson came to my room the next day, while I was packing for the journey to the sea. I was on his nerves badly.

"I'd go with you—only, a woman could n't take such chances—" he began.

"I'll see you down in the valley, I hope," said I, looking up from my knees. I was straining at the buckle of my saddle-bags. He stood there uneasily, regarding me with a queer mixture of hope and alarm. I was n't so sure as I had been the first night, about his being yellow or insignificant. I could n't bear to torture him.

"Dickson," I said, straightening up, "I'm here for a year—among other things, to win or lose on the gold proposition down in the valley. Nobody sent me here. Nobody has a commercial hook on what I do. I pay my own expenses. All the reward I expect to get is a matter of river-bed luck. You've been square with me. The fact that I thought I saw you somewhere before does n't mean anything to me but just that."

"I'm obliged to you, Ryerson," he said. "I've been shut up a bit lately, and it's drawn me rather fine. Do you—I speak purely as a friend—happen to be shy—in any way?"

I took it in the way he meant.

"I'm not flush," said I, "but, for the present—all fixed, thank you."

He bowed, and turned toward the hall, calling, "Lillian!"

She came to the door as she was—in a silk robe, held in place with one hand. The other was extended to me. Her hair was but half-done; yet she looked very fresh and attractive—in her fearless, wide-open way. I always thought of her as a creature of vast ranging.

"Mr. Ryerson is leaving," Dickson said. "We may overtake him in the valley, if luck favors—"

"I'm in favor of taking luck by the nearest handle," she remarked, laughing at us; and then added, in the queer, incomprehensible way of some women, "You two look good together. . . . Good-by."

Her hand was warm and small and strong; and Dickson's was lean and eager in mine. I was glad for the changed look in his eyes.

I reached the small town on the coast that night, and the following morning I set out to engage a boat. The fishermen were about—blown and faded brown men, the shine of black long since gone from their hair with sun and salt and wind—men used to looking into the wind's eye. There were plenty of boats—but, as I expected to go alone, it appeared that I must buy outright. . . . At this juncture a white man appeared.

"I'm going down the coast," said he. "I belong to the Geodetic Survey—and my name is Yarbin."

I tried not to smile, and refrained from asking what Geodetic Survey. Yarbin was young, had a big nose, and what would be a cold gray eye, if it were not swimming in inflammations. His lips were twitching from the night before, but they would n't twitch long, for he drew a black bottle as large as a rolling-pin from his pocket, and offered it to me, beckoning me away from the fishermen.

"Will you have a little slug?" he suggested.

"Thanks, no, Mr. Yarbin. I like the morning air. Where are you going?"

"Down the coast." He closed one inflamed lid over the left gray eye, and held it there with effort, his head cocked on one side, looking mysterious. . . . I noted pock-marks, a ruffle of scar-tissue around his throat, and a brown pigeon-chest. . . . It occurred to me to take a chance.

"I want to get to Tropicania," I said. "I believe—at least, I've heard—it's worth fighting for to get a claim there. I'm not a soldier—but one might learn the game, to judge by the look of those who play at it. I'm a miner—"

"Yep, I'm going down to Galbraith's diggin's. I'm drunk, you see—"

"That's all right—stay convalescent."

He acquiesced readily and sealed it with a "slug."

We procured a boat and stores. Late that afternoon I carried Yarbin aboard as a final package, and set sail. . . . It was a strange night to me. The sea was calm and brilliant, the moon a great mysterious pearl. The forest of South America was a black ribbon on the left, and the mountains were contours of denser night. Yarbin snored,

in a changeable way that broke monotony. I left him a few drinks for morning, and the rest washed overboard—with a little assistance.

Yarbin's mutterings were better than most men's self-conscious utterances. He had been vastly around—had fought everything, and alcohol everywhere. He spoke of cavalry outfits, Dannemora—and once he spoke of Galbraith as "king of the golden river." Then, toward morning, he began to come in closer to reality. Bits of ballads that I knew, and some that I did not, arose to his lips—and all had the color of sea and plain and mountain and wild women and poor suffering gamesters of men.

Presently he sat up, stopped his singing, to become ill; after which, he went off his head again. Then it all came out what he was doing. He was a spy from Vivera—on the way to join Galbraith and throw him—possibly in the battle. All this came in fragments. He spoke of himself as a stowaway, castaway, marine; and of Vivera and his men as "a running sore of an outfit." These varied matters appeared in his monologue with lavender gloves, barrel-houses, and girls who love a sailor. . . .

He had money—doubtless Vivera's. Plainly, he was a trained soldier. Such men are at a premium in new gold countries, where miners are many, but leaders of men few. Galbraith would not be slow to make use of Yarbin; hence the craft of Vivera. The time might come in action for Yarbin to turn the issue against the old Master.

I held the tiller as the dawn broke, and reflected upon the mystery of life. Here into my hands had fallen an instrument of deep menace to Mary Galbraith's father. Yet Yarbin was a friend of mine. It had been so with Dickson—Dickson was a friend of mine. . . . And now the great equatorial day broke; the mountains rolled up in the east; the shore was edged with dazzling lights where the morning sun fell upon the breaking waves; the sea swung in a great, slow, rhythmic breathing, changed from deep blue to radiant living green—and before me was Yarbin, his life in my hands—and sick he was. He opened his eyes, regarded me and the morning.

"You'll be all right," I said. "We'll get together a little later to-day, and make the grade inshore to the rebels. We've been sailing fourteen hours. At two or three miles an hour, we must be about far enough down the coast. Do you happen to know where we are?"

He turned around with a groan, and squinted at the shore-line ahead. "We're there," he said. "That's Galbraith's Headland. We go up the canyon here. Say, I didn't undertake to take you for a fool, did I, any time last night?" he added, with a ghastly smile.

"Not in the least."

"I'm really glad of that. Did I cry?"

"Not a tear."

"That was fine of me. I suppose I told you I had a mother once?"

"No, Yarbin. I had to hypothecate—"

"Are you an old hand at hyp—? I'll have to have a notch more steam on that."

"Well, you see, the night was calm. I crept offshore a bit to keep away the mosquitoes. It was so very still and fine—I had time to put two and two together."

He winced. "How many services did I say I had soldiered in?"

"I can't recall."

"Canadian Mounted Police—for instance?"

"No."

"You see, I'm not naturally a liar. I've never served with those Johnnies."

I did n't tell him anything. This seemed best, until I could get him straightened out. We rounded the Headland and ran into the canyon-mouth in mid-forenoon. Yarbin evidently knew that Galbraith held the promontory.

"You do the talking," he said, when the sentries hailed us from the heights. "Tell 'em you picked me up in Libertad."

I felt the soft spot in this. It was as if I were getting the spy through.

IV.

BUT I remembered that Yarbin would have taken the trip alone—that he was ill, and could n't think; that there was ample time for us to settle our standing in relation to Galbraith. . . .

The old Master had left the Headland headquarters but an hour before—ridden back to the valley after having passed the night with the outposts. The commander at the promontory was a grizzled old native, a Colonel Viringhy—a blend of Spanish and Indian. He gave us over to an escort and dispatched us to Galbraith with imprecations.

"Cheerful old Aztec," Yarbin remarked, as we rode together. My friend was improving.

The Headland was a small arrow-head of rock jutting out into the Pacific. Imposing as it was from the sea, the Headland was but the first step of the great mountain—a ledge to the attainment of the unattainable. The southern wall of the canyon was formed from these huge masses of earth and rock, stretching straight in to Tropicania, a distance of ten miles.

The trail was a shelf along the canyon wall, sometimes a thousand feet above the river-bed, often sinking into the gloom of the monster escarpment, but never rising out of the chasm. The opposite wall was everywhere lower and out of alignment, for a distance of seven miles in

from the Headland. At this point, the shelf of the trail widened and was directly opposite the summit of the opposite cliff, which was overshot naturally, so that a bridge of twenty-four foot span was sufficient to connect Tropicania with Libertad and the north. Galbraith (I learned later) had been quick to seize this strategic point, and before his dredging machinery was installed in the river-bed beyond, he spent a fortnight turning the stationary wooden bridge into a steel draw-structure, which, when raised, cut off the valley from the world. Here also he enlarged the shelf by cutting back into the rock, and established his fortifications, which commanded both the trail from the Headland and the road to Libertad, across the gorge.

The Headland itself was scalable with great difficulty from the sea-front, and in one place from the river-bed; but an inferior force with ammunition could hold it at either or both points against a great number. Despite the length of the trail, only one other point required a guard: the Libertad bridge, known as the Pass. . . .

Yarbin and I, with the escort, reached this bridge in mid-afternoon, and the party rested an hour. My friend reviewed the situation:

"You would n't think there was such a position in the world—and with a steamer-landing back at the promontory! Galbraith would have to run out of ammunition—to lose the Headland; and, even so, he could retreat to this bridge, yank it up, and defend the Pass with snow-balls."

"And the canyon is impassable, going and coming, from rocks and rapids," said I.

"Yes, and you'd have to be an eagle in the air to get over the mountains," Yarbin added.

"But they say it's a *valley* ahead," I remarked. "How can this be the only way down from Libertad, for instance, if there's a general drop into a valley?"

"There is n't," he answered. "It only falls away on this side. The other wall is sheer, worse than ever, all the way around Tropicania, to where the canyon tightens again—more rapids, more boulders—all the way down into Peru and the Horn, for all I know."

This gave me but a vague idea of what I beheld later that afternoon; as around the final bend of the descending trail, Tropicania appeared in one grand sweep of vision. The ledge had dropped into the river-bed, and the mountains fallen back, forming a broad glacis three miles or more long—and this was Tropicania. Its northern boundary was the unbroken canyon wall—in many places a thousand feet sheer. In the distance plainly could be seen the narrowing of the gorge again, the southern mountains closing in to reform the canyon, rock-strewn and impassable with rapids. Absolutely, it was cut off—at the will of bridge-holders at the Pass.

At this juncture Yarbin scored a point that was to live in my mind for months.

"Only the Lord of Hosts could conceive such a perfect position—but that's its trouble," he remarked.

"What do you mean?" I asked, sensing the big difficulty without grasping it.

"How's he going to get out with his gold?"

"He's a right smart man," I said weakly.

"It's a right smart fortress," Yarbin answered.

And all this time I was staring down into Tropicania. A strange pastoral—in the long afternoon shadows! The stamp of centuries was upon it—save for the mining machinery, the dredges, and the glistening tin roofs, new as Nome.

Thus we entered the valley, Yarbin speaking no word; and I out of the present, world-straying, among thoughts too big for me. . . . Now I heard the voices of my own countrymen, and saw the natives moving to and fro, bare-legged and hungry-looking, a strange ashen texture to the brown of the faces—the same weathered look that lay upon the ruined city. . . . At last we were among the ruins . . . and a lean old man came forth. His was an imperator's nose, and cheeks that were sunken and transparent. His dark eyes pierced my mind—and flitted to Yarbin. He spoke to our escort, which dissolved. So intensely was I watching the father of Mary Galbraith, that I did not understand his words, until he said a second time:

"Come in, gentlemen."

V.

GALBRAITH'S quarters were apart from the settlement proper, high on the slope, and close to the largest of the ruins, dubbed the "Vatican." In the rear were canvas partitions for the sleeping-rooms of the leader and his staff; and in the front was the office and general headquarters. It was here that we three sat down to talk after supper.

"I am a miner," said I. "Six months ago I left Alaska. I reached Libertad four or five days ago, and determined to get down here with you." I added how I had reached him, and the incident of meeting Yarbin.

Galbraith reflected a moment. A long, slim black cheroot remained in his mouth constantly, mostly unlit. He talked with it, but did no chewing. Presently he asked several questions about Alaska, and then turned to Yarbin.

"I don't know much about anything except soldiering—and I have n't any papers as to that," my companion said. "Take it or not, I've been a success afield and a fool in garrison. I got drunk in Libertad

and on the shore. I've been drunk in a good many places, but I know how to get a fight out of a bunch of men."

"Very interesting," said Galbraith. "But why did you come here?"

"You've got a fight on, have n't you?"

"Yes—yes, I believe I have—but Vivera has also. It would have been easier to get to Vivera from Libertad."

"You looked to me the gamier proposition."

"Ah," said Galbraith.

The reply seemed right to him, and I saw myself being drawn, against my will, into the vortex between these men. What surprised me in Galbraith was his lack of suspicion—or could he be acting? I had looked for a man with the hard taint of gold upon him—a man who had hungered and thirsted, fought and contrived for gold, with such passion that he had desolated the hearts of his woman and child. It seemed to me now that there was a big other side; that some inner devil had kept him abroad in the ruck of new gold lands, but that a finer spirit was not dead.

And it seemed to me also that Yarbin was new at this spy business. The man whom he had come to betray, now poured wine for him, and had brought food of the best. More than this, Galbraith treated us both with his trust and a warming culture that is rare afield. Obstacles indeed were in the way of committing treason upon the person of this incomparable host. Doubtless Yarbin had expected first to be treated like a stowaway, to show his quality under fire. I saw that my friend was white enough to be troubled.

Quite frankly Galbraith appeared to expose his entire situation that night.

"If it were absolutely known whether Tropicania lay in Ecuador or Peru, there would n't be any fight on," he explained. "Possibly there would n't be any Tropicania. Peru says the Calderon marks the boundary; Ecuador says not. The two republics have been grumbling over the border-line since the beginning. Now there's a fight on because I find gold in the Calderon. I have learned that whenever gold is found, men are not as they were yesterday. But I missed no chance in my big machinery investment—ordered shooting-iron pound for pound."

Galbraith laughed a little. "I knew it would come. Libertad was first to hear there was big gold in the Calderon. Then Guayaquil, and up the Magdalena, from town to town, to Barranquilla, from isle to isle, quickening sleepy Mexico, and even New York—my God, how gold-news travels! Some ugly voltage seemed turned upon these mountains. The men about me took on a haggard, glaring look. Then I heard first from Vivera. The fact is, Vivera is a free-lance, just as I am. But he did n't discover an El Dorado. He did n't spend a fortune for mining machinery. Vivera, it appears now, represents Ecuador. They know

what a cheap adventurer he is—that's what makes me hate Ecuador for using him. I could have whipped Vivera in an afternoon, but it would only have meant another army trailing up from Peru to strike Tropicania."

The years had taken Galbraith over the rough places of aggressiveness. He had no hate in his heart, no time nor energy to spend in execrating his enemy, nor his kind. He placed the situation, most dramatic and absorbing, with the calmness of a man outlining a mere commercial manoeuvre. Here he had a republic on either flank, and while he temporized with each in turn, he bored for fortune in the gravel of the Rio Calderon. Galbraith fascinated me, as he added: "I hesitate to become the buffer between two republics fighting full tilt. The trouble is, they would not forget me in their excess of malice toward each other. . . . So, you see, I have a careful game to play, though I am well pleased at the way it is unfolding. There'll be another fight at the Headland presently. . . ."

Galbraith tossed a cheroot through the open doorway, and sighed wearily as he chose a fresh one. I heard his sentries abroad in the darkness, and in one of the huts below, a miner was singing Tosti's "Good-by":

" . . . Lines of white on a sullen sea."

The whole environment—the torrid night, the glowing stars, the thick walls of stone, the slow, soft pressure of a breeze upon the candles, the thought of two animated republics and their ancient exchange of hatred, the river flowing silently below—all blended into a mysterious enticement about the figure of this gaunt old man, with the kindly voice and tolerant mind. The picture challenged me in a way I can hardly express. . . .

I seemed to catch that instant, from the queer smile that lingered about his mouth, the bigger meaning for his second headquarters at the Headland; his stationing of a force there by the sea. Was not Vivera held there, too? Did he not need this ammunition as much or more than Galbraith? . . .

I saw more clearly now. The old fighter before me, dividing his force, one part to watch the sea, and to keep Vivera (who was n't sure of his ground with Ecuador) watching the sea; the other silently, swiftly, probing for gold bullets in the stony tissue of the Calderon—a big, quiet, masterful game of temporizing, where another would have been at blood-letting. And now each day was a big winning to Galbraith. I was glad I had come, glad to serve, glad his daughter's lustre was upon him. I saw where she had gotten her splendid capacity to wait. . . . I saw that Yarbin was stupefied, not with wine, but

with the quality of this gamester, whom he had come to deliver into a common disturber's hands.

Galbraith was speaking again. "You see, there are white men here who staked all they have with me on this venture. There are other golden rivers. I have lost many times before. I'm not going to cut my throat if we lose the Calderon and the dredge, but even *these* white men don't live by ventures as I do. I can't bear to see them lose. They're as clean-jawed a lot of chaps down in the settlement as I ever led, and I've led many a lot. They stand by me, sick with work and gold-fever; wounds, some of them have, and all are worn down with the tension and the magnetism of home. . . . Why, many a woman back in the States is planning lace curtains and carpets and cottages against the return of these fellows."

Yarbin gulped a glass of wine.

"Looks pretty dark at times," Galbraith added softly, "but I don't think it's in the cards for us to lose this trip. . . ."

We were shown to cots slightly apart from each other, and I lay awake for hours under the mosquito canopy, thinking in the darkness.

VI.

TROPICANIA was cut off from the world of mails by Vivera's lines, stretching between the valley and Libertad. It was just for the present, Galbraith said. . . . A man's life is not where his body moves, but where his thoughts are; so I hungered for letters from Mary Galbraith, as I longed for the fullness of life—thin sheets of tough, crinkly paper, finely written (such as had overtaken me at Panama and Guayaquil), with a brown seal on the back, transcripts of her heart and mind and life.

As I lay awake thinking and longing, a sentry challenged outside, and Galbraith—an old man in the lightness of his eating and sleeping—was upon his feet before the courier was admitted.

"Hello, Santell," he said softly, and lit a cheroot. His face looked gray and gaunt in the flare of the match. The flash of his eyes left me thinking of his strange power. . . . Then lantern-light and Santell. The impressions came too swiftly for a second: a light rippling laugh, a blood-curdling oath—a tall, delicate, red-mouthed youth with black wavy hair. . . . I did not hear the news he brought.

From a doze toward morning, I heard the creak of machinery and found the dawn-gray in my eyes. The sun was rising through the end of the canyon—a portal to the gods was the gorge. . . . And down among the last shadows of night, the men of Galbraith toiled. . . .

"They're great fellows," the Master said, stepping up behind me. "I often think some of them are like migratory birds that would beat themselves to death in a cage, if held from their southern flights."

"A particular type of the man I mean is your friend Yarbin, I take it," he added, drawing a bit nearer. "I have several—many such. They are valuable—less down yonder at the dredge, than out on the lines with old Viringhy. Yarbin would fly at the throat of every department of holiness, as it seems to me—and yet he'd be *there* in the very pit of action when it came."

I looked at him squarely and said:

"I've only known Yarbin since day before yesterday. He does n't claim to be much—except a good man in action. I've seen him drunk—and, even so, it appeared that he was n't a liar constitutionally."

". . . A rifle and a dozen rounds of ammunition," he mused. "Positively no mining tool is so important. A rifle disposed of to the enemy is two rifles—"

Yarbin was coming towards us.

"Let's have some coffee," Galbraith added, greeting my recent companion—who was plainly on the gain.

After breakfast, Galbraith led us through the ruined city. Yarbin was quicker than I to see the pits and emplacements. . . . The slopes everywhere, I now discerned, were ruffled with entrenchments. Yarbin's eyes gleamed as these matters broke upon his understanding.

"They don't breed 'em down here, that could take this away from a couple of hundred white men," he remarked. "But where's your arsenal?"

"Right at hand," Galbraith said readily. "The Vatican yonder lies in about the centre of the position, and its lower walls are very thick."

This was the eminent ruin.

"Huh!" came from Yarbin.

"I'd like to spend a day with you here," Galbraith said, at this point. "But I'm off for the Headland. Perhaps you two would care to ride with me. It *would* be companionable—"

Yarbin nodded. I assented eagerly. . . . The fourth of the party was Leek—whether orderly, armor-bearer, personal servant, or partner, I had been unable to make out.

We had travelled leisurely for an hour and a half, and the Pass was behind, when the sound of firing reached us from ahead. The look of Galbraith's profile was a shock to me. He beckoned to Leek, and the two spurred out of earshot. . . . It occurred to me that I had something to say in private to my companion at this juncture, which Galbraith had chosen for a secret conference with his second.

"You're a good fellow, and I like you, Yarbin," I said, "but we've got to split right here, if you mean to carry out your original idea in this mining outfit."

"I thought I must have slopped over that night," he said hoarsely.
"You looked as if you had something on me in the morning."

"I did n't drill you for it. It was on your mind with the white line—and the white line would n't let it stay there. The point is, do you love Vivera?"

He cursed with soft eloquence. "No, but I'm in his service."

"And you've eaten the bread of Galbraith—"

"Yes, curse him! He makes it hard."

"We've only got a minute—tell me!"

"You have n't said anything yet?"

"Not a word, Yarbin; but I will if you wobble to-day. I'm for Galbraith."

"I won't wobble to-day."

I liked the look in his eyes as he said this, and it had to suffice, for Galbraith beckoned. . . . Leek passed us, as we spurred forward. He did not seem to observe that we were on the trail, as he quickened his mule back toward the settlement.

"If it's a skirmish down on the shore," Galbraith remarked quietly as we joined him, "it's only just begun, or Viringhy would have a courier on the way back to us."

He had hardly finished when we heard the drum of hoofs again, and a running mule appeared around a bend of the trail a few hundred yards ahead.

VII.

"It's Santell—Viringhy's second in command," Galbraith muttered, as the flying courier appeared. His mule had gained full momentum, and apparently had lost the "feel" of the bit. It was like trying to stop a locomotive on a greased down-grade. . . . I could but laugh at the frail, feathery Santell—braced back and sawing, his woman's jaw set, and his slender arms bare to the white of the armpits. He got his mount down to a turning, a hundred yards past. Galbraith waited patiently. . . . The curses in the air as Santell spurred his beast back were startling as foulness in the mouth of a child. I found myself thinking he could n't comprehend what he said. . . . A dissipated, unshaven, dare-devil face; but feminine—a high, queer voice, and the fresh red mouth. The message he brought was but a thin shaving of substance in a thick layer of blasphemy:

"We sighted a steamer coming down at daybreak. She was within a mile of shore. Vivera started his attack ten or twelve minutes ago. Looks as if we could hold 'em off—"

Galbraith checked him. We four moved forward at a trot.

"Good mule—four-mile mule," Santell confided to Yarbin. "You

see, he was wound up for the whole journey. It's hard to stop him under a mile when he gets going like that. You have to talk to him——”

“I could see him beginning to listen, as he went by—ears turned right back toward you,” Yarbin observed.

The day grew hotter as we neared the sea at a fast trot. The fierce, torrid light was thrown from behind. Through the rift of the gorge at last I saw the Pacific. The glare was blinding. Firing was steady ahead, but not thick.

Over the last bend in the shelving trail our mules swung, and below on the terrible slope from the river to the Headland, I saw the white puffs of Vivera's soldiers among the rocks. The stretch of trail approaching the Headland from Tropicania made a last deep sag. It was, therefore, open to the fire from the opposite cliffs. Vivera could sweep this exposed trail, designated “Causeway,” from across the gorge, while he sent his forces in a charge up the slopes.

I wish I could suggest the tremendous setting of this little drama. It was like some of Wagner's music in the immensity of it—gorge, headland, mountain, and sea. . . . The shots from across and below came to my ears badly out of time and tune. The attack was half-hearted, it seemed to me, and the scorn of Yarbin was militant. . . . Vivera was finding it difficult to drive his men up the half-nude slopes, under the leisurely fire of Viringhy above. Instead of criticising these men, I rather admired them. It looked silly and abject to try to take such a position. Vivera was not leading any of these charges in person. And he was the one who had a fortune to win. I'd have needed a cell and a year to make Yarbin see this.

The adventure of the day now appeared clearly. To reach the Headland, we must cross the Causeway in more or less full sweep of Vivera's fire from the opposite cliff. Already I heard the nasty sound of steel cutting the air, and was coughing from the dust, as the bullets splintered the rock. Galbraith bent forward and spurred his mule to a gallop. Lean, gray, and old, that profile, all but the eyes, that flashed piercingly through the shade of his wide Peruvian hat.

The sound of a slug above my head was like a curse—a quick-growled curse, with a murderous force behind it. I dropped forward onto the mule's bristles. Santell rode lightly, apparently giving no thought to the gathering fire which we drew; his red lips slightly parted, his black eyes filled with a softness I could never understand—bland, wide-open, calm, yet some hell was in them which I divined, though I could not define. Yarbin was riding as if up and down in front of a red-hot battery, his face flushed with excitement—queer, humorous figures of speech dropping from his tongue. It was drink to him, and bread, too. And now we four were taking the Causeway at a gallop, and the air was venomous with bullets. It seemed as if they marked me off

as a knife-thrower outlines his accessory. . . . There was a cheer in the air, and Viringhy's soldiers were grinning around me, before I straightened up and reined. Looking back, I saw Galbraith and the old, white-haired Viringhy disappear into the latter's headquarters.

The steamer that had caused the attack was now a mile offshore, straight out, trailing her plume of jet, but making no change in course. The firing kept me restless. A big gun crashed at intervals, followed always by a cheer from the defenders. At the doorway of Headquarters, a steel slug drove into the masonry a foot from my head, and filled my eyes with rock-dust. It was too hot for tobacco. There was a binding regulation on the drinking supply, and Viringhy's soldiers had to have permission every time they fired a shot. Moreover, they had to show results. A pressure was brought to bear on this matter that filled me with a deep and morbid terror. Either Galbraith was exceedingly delicate about decreasing Vivera's force, or else he thought more of Springfield and Remington cartridges than he did of nuggets from the Rio Calderon.

The big gun crashed again. . . . Evidently, thought I, Galbraith has battery-fodder other than rifle-cartridges this morning. The cheer died away—and was raised again. I wondered what the big gun had struck this time. In any event, Vivera was n't stopped. His soldiers forming to charge—companies of his men queerly knotted, among the rocks below. Viringhy would centre his fire upon them; a few fallen would slow up the charge, as if their bodies were tied to the others; another careful volley, and the knots gave way. This was the routine.

A sudden crash of the big gun at the left shook the very centres of my being. In a kind of fascination, I had wandered close to the hooded part of the cliff, where Galbraith's artillery had held forth all day.

A strangely familiar smell was in the air. . . . I was compelled by the idea of peering in upon that tireless, implacable gunner under the hood of rock. Around the works I made my way. Galbraith's soldiers, hoarse with thirst, lay in the trenches. Their humor was dry and biting. They were attentive but not rushed. To save cartridges was the order—and they chafed when opportunities came and went. None minded me, and I crawled along the edge to the crevasse where the gunner was stationed. . . . And now the familiar odor moved my brain with boyhood memories, and the rock was drifted with burnt paper—a red and white litter and smudges of splintered wadding. . . .

Just at this instant Santell corralled me roughly. His face was evil, as he commanded me back to Headquarters. But I had seen. In the ledge of rock, with a sputtering fuse, sat a giant fire-cracker—lodged in the crevasse where it would reverberate with compounded effect.

"My God!" I muttered, "this is pure morality."

But I had not pleased Galbraith by my enterprise. His face was gray with anxiety, and often he stared back to the sea, where the steamer moved on almost imperceptibly, her smoke trailing off to the north. She was slow and heavily laden. . . .

And now Santell, striding jauntily ahead of me, began a report in his thin voice—but was silenced by Galbraith. . . . I was thinking how definitely Yarbin and I had hampered the old Master. Most men would have had us in irons. . . .

Just at this instant I saw a quick change in the back of Santell's neck—as if a blur of red had crossed my eyes. He had just turned into Headquarters behind Galbraith. The boy's bare, slim arms lifted, and he toppled over backward at my feet. . . . And now I was looking down at his face. His great eyes had darkened, some deep staring light far within, but all soft and expressionless about. The glare had softened. They moved to me—to Yarbin—to Galbraith—but could not hold nor see. . . . There was a quiver of infinite pathos about the mouth, and then I heard, directed to no one in particular—words which made me understand that he was going out in the arms of his father.

Galbraith held the frail figure—long after it had divided.

VIII.

GALBRAITH, Yarbin, and I were riding back toward the valley late in the afternoon. The Headland had not changed hands. Vivera had withdrawn his lines, convinced at last that the steamer had no business with Galbraith. . . . The old Master had not spoken, since he waved an *adios* on the Causeway a half-hour before. The death of Santell—I alone knew how that had wrecked him. We were nearing the Pass, making the last up-grade through the darkening gorge. I could no longer bear to have Galbraith suspect me for a spy. I planned to make my attitude clear to him that night.

"Well, you see what I meant, by telling you I could have whipped Vivera in an afternoon," he said wearily.

Thus the old Lion-heart kept up his bluff:

"The fact is, I don't dare whip Vivera. My only business is to hold what I have, and to keep him thinking that he can take the Headland at the proper time. . . . Poor Santell! His room was ready." . . . He glanced at me.

Four or five rifles cracked slightly below us across the canyon—from the thick growths at the very edge of the precipice.

"Run for it!" Galbraith commanded, leaning forward and rowel-

ling his mount. We thundered down the rocky slope, the rifles emptying their magazines behind.

"That was clever of Vivera," Galbraith remarked faintly, as we turned past the valley outposts. "Lucky he didn't get one of you fellows. Vivera wants me badly. It was meant for me—this firing—and so was the bullet that got poor Santell to-day." He spoke in a wheezy way and jerkily, as one fighting for air.

"But *you're* hit," I cried, grasping his elbow.

"I guess I am," he said quietly, "but I can't be hard-hit—did n't even knock me out of the saddle. It's in the shoulder somewhere, I think. . . . Oh, I can make Headquarters all right."

And now, whether it was meant or not—I could not tell at that moment—Yarbin had uncovered, ridden around to the opposite side of the old Master—and *uncovered*. It was rather dark for me to study his face. . . . And thus we rode to the Pass and down the long darkening grade to the valley. . . .

Galbraith had been struck in the shoulder by a steel bullet, which luckily had not stopped there. His left arm was useless, but no bone appeared to be splintered. Jason, the young surgeon of the settlement, took care of the wound. That night I sat at the edge of Galbraith's cot. We whispered long.

"Vivera understands that one tired old man holds this outfit together. It was clever of him—that assassination party," he said, in great pain.

"I was a trouble to you to-day," I said. "I'm sorry for that." And I told him about my summer with Mary—and what she said, when I asked her if she would be my Mary always; how she had sent me away to make myself sure—how I had chosen South America.

There was a long silence, and through the dusk of the candles I saw the pain come and go.

"It's almost like having a son," he whispered. "It's worth a wound to hear. Mary, little Mary—I wonder if she knows how much I have thought about her—how I see her still in her ribbons? . . . Her mother and I never managed together—but I loved her mother. That's queer, isn't it? Mary and her mother cried in the same way. . . . I never could stay—when they cried."

Question after question he asked me for hours. I saw how he had loved the drama of gold-hunting, the great gamble; that his strong, fluent character found expression in far chances and difficult masteries among men.

"I remember when I was like you—afiel'd with *my* Mary brimming in my brain! Oh, many years ago. I thought of her day and night—day and night. I went back with a bit of a fortune, too—but I could not stay. It's my devil. Some men have drink, some men have women,

and some men have money-devils—mine were the far chances. And yet, only afield does a man know how much he needs a woman! . . . Are you to be like that—as I was—with my Mary's daughter?"

"I speak it badly," I said. "I have great respect for the Lure that drew you away again and again. . . . But I think—if you'll forgive me—I see now, as I never could fail to see again at any time, the boyishness of all this, its commonness, compared with making a great woman happy."

"I think you've hit it," the old Master said. "Mary's mother could not make me see this—until I was old. I was old before these became boyish things to me. I did not put them away in time. And you're so young to know all this. . . . If you make Mary happy, you will do what only the giants of this world are able to do."

I bent forward.

"You know, when I was hit to-day," he said quietly, "I sort of saw the end. I'm an old man—times are running close. It's not all as I told you. We're strapped. There are n't two rounds of ammunition in my command. . . . And then, if I'm down—there's no other. I've learned command, Ryerson—there's no joy in it, no pride in any part of it—to an old man. . . . I should have seen these things as a young man—as you have—"

"I did n't see them—it was your daughter who showed me."

"It came from the misery of her mother," he added. "We're all bound together in the happiness-fortune now—the four of us. Just one realization—such is the fruit of four lives of hard service. And the result—it's too stiff, this thinking. . . . Good-night, Ryerson."

His hand came out in the dark and gripped mine—a lean, feverish hand. There were no more words that night.

IX.

THERE followed two days with no change at the valley nor Headland. Galbraith did not leave his bed; Yarbin remained dry and brooded. I moved about the settlement, studying all the activities, and dreaming of letters to and from Mary—both cut off by Vivera's lines. She would doubt the world, the mails and all, but keep her faith. Only her lover, before her eyes, could break this faith. But I dreaded the misery of silence for her—as it came to me.

On the third morning after the fight at the Headland and Galbraith's wound, Yarbin disappeared.

Half-way between the Pass and the Headland, I overtook his mule. The fear came that Vivera's sharpshooters had picked off my friend; yet no shots had been reported at the Pass. Then the sickening dread was added, that Yarbin had been possessed of some way of communicat-

ing with Vivera. If he reported how low on ammunition was the force at the Headland, and the Tropicania outfit generally, there could be no doubt of the issue. Vivera would drive his army up the Causeway, and the man who had come with me would be responsible. Again and again the thought came: If he should tell Vivera of Galbraith's shortage, the Headland would change hands, perhaps this day, and Tropicania would be cut off from the ammunition-steamer. . . . Yet, in spite of the stress, I made no report to Viringhy of Yarbin's disappearance. Somehow, I had to give my strange comrade the benefit. At the sea, they thought him back in the valley; and in Tropicania, he was supposed to be at the Headland. . . . Had Galbraith inquired directly, I should have told him; but when I saw his suffering and anxiety, I was grateful that this was spared him. . . . The next morning the Chief sent for me early.

"Tom, it's going to be a noisy day at the Headland," he said wearily. "I should be there, but I can't. There'll be fighting. I'll keep Leek here for emergencies. You are to help Viringhy hold the Headland—until further orders. . . . It's the last fight there."

"Is the ship due to-day?" I whispered excitedly.

"Yes," he answered, and the pale shadow of a smile wavered over the gray face. "You'll be back here to-night with good news, I trust. Take care of yourself."

I was impatient to leave him before he could ask about Yarbin. . . . The passage to the Headland was painfully slow that morning, for I accompanied a mule-pack with the last dole of ammunition for Viringhy's fighters. It was pitiful to me—a dozen boxes of cartridges; and what a volley we drew on the Causeway, as the little train was driven across under the yells of the packers. . . . The ship was in the offing, and fighting was on.

This day's attack was identical with the other in its main features: little charges one after another repulsed up to noon and beyond. I could not help feeling that Vivera was toying with us—pulling our shots in preparation for his grand upward dash to the Causeway. At two o'clock in the afternoon, the steamer turned in from the offing!

This was the move that Vivera waited for. I saw his big force marshalling in the thickly wooded ways across and below—glimpees of line after line of heretofore unused native soldiery—a big fatuous reserve.

It would have been laughable, the seriousness of the preparations, if the stake were not life and death for Galbraith. And he had expected good news from me this night! A long line broke out of the entanglements below, and sped up the open slopes called the Glacis.

Viringhy answered the move; our men swarmed along the edges of the Causeway, and began firing in earnest. It will be seen that if

this line of Vivera's were not checked and broken, we of the Headland would quickly be cut off from the main force in the valley! Vivera, victorious, could outnumber us three to one. It meant butchery—and the men knew it. They defended with an eye ever on the Causeway—ready for the dash across at the last moment. I saw an altogether new zeal in the enemy, a determination not shown in any previous movement.

Now the last terrible strain on the ammunition-boxes. There was no holding back. The numbers of the charge had to be withstood by hard, steady fire.

Again and again the point was broken, but reformed; each time higher up the cliffs the charges reached; and each time certain of the most daring found places of refuge in the rocks, out of the range of our fire. They were ready to form the point of the final charge. For an hour this action held on terrifically.

There was a yell from behind at the seaward end of the Headland. Vivera had a half-dozen small boats at sea, cutting us off from the steamer, which was now but a third of a mile offshore; and a small column had been launched by boats at the Headland base, preparing to make a charge up the steep trail. . . .

I faced it that moment—*Failure*. They were too many. In another half-hour, our rifles would be useless save as clubs. . . . The ship crept nearer. The thought of Yarbin was poison to me. The cliffs up to the Causeway were filling with men from the charges.

And now Viringhy realized the crisis. He could not hold his soldiers at the point of the Headland. The defensive force crumbled there again and again. Their fear was plain. If the Causeway defense failed, they were caught. They fought willingly enough on the Causeway, where there still remained a chance of retreat, but Vivera's small boats stood between us and the ship's cargo.

I saw Vivera settle back for the last effort—a concerted charge on the Headland and the Causeway. Viringhy's command was out of hand. His men filled in along the Causeway, and there was a red-hot bit of action—a seething of bullets at close range; the enemy swarming among the rocks. . . . And now I have a confused picture of writhing, wounded, pitiful figures of barefooted men, hard hit and limply detached from the rocks to roll down the Glacis. Here was the ghastliness of a close-range fight. . . . A yell from the Valley trail drew my eyes. Leek was coming at a gallop, and behind him on foot—Yarbin, spent and staggering.

X.

LEEK rode straight to Viringhy; I made for Yarbin. . . . He had not been drinking. He was not bloody, nor wounded apparently in any way; yet he was white and drooping.

"What is it?" I asked, glad of his life.

"Just played," he gasped.

The fighting was wild in our ears, but this I saw, before all: there was no shame on the face of Yarbin. . . . I drew him back from the rim of the Causeway, my arm upon his shoulder. It was just at this instant that I heard the call of "Retreat" from Viringhy. . . . There was a startled curse from Yarbin.

"They're giving up—for God's sake, what for?"

Viringhy's men had broken and were streaming across the Causeway. . . . It was all slaty and bitter to me—the yell of exultation from the enemy on the sides of the precipice; and the roar of the unimpeded charge, now rushing up the seaward face of the Headland. And I was supposed to carry back glad tidings to Galbraith. . . . A picture passed through my mind, of the old Master turning his face to the wall. . . . Yarbin was riding beside me, and we were in the canyon on the way to the Pass.

"What was the message Leek brought? That's what I'd like to know," I muttered.

"It was just after that—the old crocodile called 'Retreat'—"

"Yarbin," I began, "do you realize that I've had a hard time keeping you square—even in my own mind?"

"Yes; that's what I set out to do for myself—and it was n't a boy's job."

"What—where—and all that?"

"I came here with a mission from Vivera—to find out how Galbraith stacked up on ammunition. . . . Well, I found out, made my report, and now my slate is clean. I'm with you to the finish; only, just as I find myself ready, Viringhy calls a retreat. . . . Why, I'd have held off till night—even if I had to club Vivera to death soldier by soldier."

"Did you gain Vivera's lines?"

Yarbin grinned at me wearily.

"I could n't wing over the gorge," he said. "The bridge is swung. . . . So you've been thinking pretty hard about your old side-kicker?"

"But how did you get your stuff across the gorge?"

"Wigwagged. . . . I had climbed the cliffs, a mile this side of the Pass. All day yesterday I signalled, but did n't attract attention until night—then, when they got an operator to take me, it was too dark. But we got together this morning. It took all morning. I only had a couple of handkerchiefs, to begin with."

I was puzzled.

"What word did you send Vivera—that we were short of ammunition?"

"Did Vivera attack to-day as if he thought Galbraith was scraping the bottoms of his cartridge-boxes?" Yarbin asked in return.

"No—not until the steamer turned into the Headland—"

"Naturally, that was his cue for a big noise. Vivera had my message two hours before that."

"Then, you lied to him, Yarbin," I suggested curiously.

"No. I reported what Galbraith had confided to us. I did n't confirm it, nor use my own head to deny it. It was sent out as Galbraith's report on the matter."

"But that would n't mean anything to Vivera."

"Not a thing. But I took pains to close my deal, to let him know I was through. I told him he did n't owe me anything, that this report was the last from me—"

"You did all this to get on a square basis?" I asked.

"I've been a good soldier. It's all I have to say. Galbraith has got to me—hard and deep. The other was a money-job. . . . I sent in my resignation as a spy, before joining you again. . . . When a man does one thing well, he can't afford to play yellow to that—"

My hand sped across the dusk.

"You could have sent Vivera against us earlier—and hard," I said.

"It's turned out rotten, any way," Yarbin said moodily.

"Viringhy was all in for cartridges."

"It seems to me he could have held off a bit. My God, man—with this ship-load, Vivera—"

"He can't cross the Pass."

"He can if we're down and out of gun-powder. Any way, we can't get out."

We rode on silently. It struck me that the men already at the Pass grinned at us in a queer fashion. . . . The down-trail had a beaten, dusty look. The air was heavy, and Tropicania was veiled in dusk. Yarbin had become strangely close. . . . Far down I heard the braying of mules. We let Viringhy take the tidings into the valley. . . . The day's blood-letting had made me ill.

The thought of Mary Galbraith was like a vision of another world. I lost heart that hour of ever being with her again—so infinitely higher and lovelier was the estate of her presence, than this crude worldliness of gold and war. . . .

We rode down in the night. . . . The mules are strangely noisy, thought I. In the settlement I discovered a strange picket-line—and another. . . . It was like a mule-congress. The air was foreign with the smell of the beasts and forage and strange tobacco. Each ripple of laughter became an infection. It ran along the tents and cabins. Far below were sounds of men drinking and singing. . . .

The thought came that Vivera had taken the valley—that Galbraith was a prisoner. . . . The valley was thick with the mules.

"I guess I'm crazy," Yarbin mumbled.

I hurried into Headquarters. . . . Galbraith held out his hand smiling.

"If somebody could only have been there at the Headland, when the steamer turned and put to sea!" he chuckled.

I sat down and stared at him.

"Tell me—did n't she *look* empty?" Galbraith asked, draining the last essence of humor from the picture in his mind. . . . Finally, he saw how I was dangling, and explained:

"She unloaded her cargo of ammunition five days ago, some thirty miles north of Libertad. Two hundred mules were waiting there. They circled around Libertad and hung up on the shoulder of Moloch until to-day. I had to pull Vivera's whole force to the Headland to get them over the Pass. That's what all the manœuvring at the Headland was for. The trick was planned ninety days ago up in Barranquilla. . . . I've wanted to tell you, Tom—it was hard not to tell you—but I've found it bad luck to emit even the slightest crow ahead of time. . . . No, my son, we don't need the Headland—and neither does Vivera. . . . To-morrow morning we all get to work gold-gathering."

I went out to find Yarbin in the mulish night.

XI.

AND now passed days of steady mining—days of zest and richness. The Rio Calderon gave up her heart to modern machinery. Viringhy held the Pass, and peace brooded over the valley. Galbraith asked no more. The early dawn and the late dusk meant dollars—yellow condensed dollars—and Tropicania hummed with days of toil and nights of faro and nefariousness. At the end of a week, Galbraith promised letters.

"Do you mean that Vivera is going to let us keep the trails open between here and Libertad?" I asked in excitement.

"The fact is, Tom, the grocery store up on the slope of Moloch is still open to Tropicania orders. We can get our letters and keep in touch generally with the world, submitting our mail-bags and pack-trains to examination by Vivera's force. Anything we need for the day's work will come through unmolested. The point is, we're to dredge the Calderon to its last nugget, and then to reckon with Vivera, Ecuador, and, doubtless, Peru—to get away with our winning. Our big pack-train of guns and ammunition settled all these matters. Vivera can't get in and Galbraith can't get out, but they'll have everything ready to take what we've got—when the Calderon begins to run gray gravel. . . . One has to foresee a great many things in a game like this—"

"There's no trail out through the other canyon?" I asked.

"Absolutely not. Vivera knows that as well as I do. That part of Peru is marked 'unknown' on the maps. The canyon is narrow, filled with rocks, rapids, and falls. No trail has been shelled."

All of which Galbraith told me with unfaltering good cheer. He was ill; his face was lined with pain, but it was n't from worrying about his enemies.

The next evening I sat in Headquarters holding myself hard, until the mail-bags were carried in. . . . They came, and there was nothing for me. I could not see further. I locked the room and moved out into the dusk. There was a blur in my eyes, and a clutch at my heart. The mountains closed in. It was hard to breathe. . . . At last I heard a woman's voice calling my name. . . . It was the woman of the balcony room at Libertad, the woman whom I had met there with Dickson.

She was tall and cool and steady-eyed. She came toward me smiling, holding a lantern high. And the man was behind her. . . . There was a bloom upon this woman. She took my hand, and with her free one drew a packet of letters warm from her breast, the lantern swinging from her elbow.

I'll never forget. . . . I glanced at the writing, and then at the woman's face. She was laughing at me strangely.

"My God!—thank you," said I.

"That was one of the best things I ever did—to earn that look from a man," she said.

Then I greeted Dickson, and scarcely heard the woman's explanation that she had told them at Libertad she could get my letters to me quicker by taking them. . . . I thanked her again, and stole away to my candles. The postmarks were oddly smudged. . . . And then there was an hour of happiness. . . . I should always reverence Lillian Dickson. I felt something sacred about her. How she would have laughed at that! . . . Mary Galbraith carried me far out of the world, and its thoughts and ways. It was long after I blew out the candles that I recalled the Dickson woman asking me to find them when I had read. . . . Later I saw that a new tent had been raised near Headquarters, and as I approached, a white arm beckoned.

The events of Tropicania divide themselves into two rousing periods, and the first ended with the advent of the great pack-train of guns and cartridges. . . . The lull of rich mining lasted for more than six months. Apart from the coming of the Dicksons, there are few important tributaries to the narrative in this period.

Galbraith remained a sick man. His wound healed outwardly, but it had shaken the stronghold. My letters from Mary Galbraith came regularly from Libertad (date-marks invariably a smudge), and were

a heritage of sheer joy. Galbraith heard from his daughter—how often I never knew, nor any of the news therein—but he heard.

The old Master's courage and mastery of strategic chances had won Yarbin to his last breath. The professional soldier was given Santell's place—next to old man Viringhy in the fighting force. I was Galbraith's aide on a rather large and friendly basis; useful to him both in the departments of defense and labor. So far as I knew, only Galbraith had anything to do with the gold from the Calderon. Each day's yield was given into his hands at nightfall, and each day he was absent for an hour or more in the Vatican. The riches of the Calderon were prodigious.

During the long period of quiescence, it happened that I took several commissions of a secret nature to Libertad for our chief. My work done, on the latest of these journeys, I went as usual to the hotel; and that night I sat on the balcony (the same balcony that brought the Dicksons into my horoscope), and fell asleep over the third of a series of Galbraith's cheroots.

As I slept, I dreamed. . . . The exact matters of light and darkness and movement never cleared, but the dream was exquisite, and about Mary Galbraith. A sense of her nearness lulled me. The strange peace of it; a call to the high place of the world's elect; a swift realization of the crudities of life, and the realities of love and inner growth—out of all these came the thrilling sense that Mary Galbraith was near; that the tip of her third finger pressed against my lips—that cushioned tip of her frail third finger. . . . I awoke on the instant, and something swept from me—something that caught the moonlight in the swiftest glint. And there was a fragrance in the air that I used to sense when she was near, a fragrance that had to do with great pine forests and Superior's tonic freshness.

Startling as anything that ever happened, and altogether lovely! Of course, there was anguish in confronting an illusion, but there was such a beauty about it all, renewed reality of her tenderness, a consummate foretaste of the gladness when the year should end. . . . I could not sleep again; and never did I try so hard to sleep, in the hope that the exquisite touch might be repeated. . . . It was difficult to believe the incident unreal. . . . There was no sound from the next room. . . . A long, slender arm might have swept around the balcony partition and touched my face.

XII.

THE next morning I met two Americans, Teck and Morgan, who asked permission to ride back to Tropicana with my party. They represented themselves as retired merchants from the States, taking a leisurely "look-see" around this rich and various world. . . . They wearied

me. I was out of training for such, and in the thrall of last night's vision. They seemed restless to impress upon me their station in life, as do only those who are not certain of their place. . . . A few remarks startled me. As "retired merchants," they became unstable in my mind. A laugh, a look, a word—and I caught a glimpse of an uncommon sophistication—the hardness of hard men's feelings—a larger comprehension than merchants usually have. . . . At the Pass—it struck me like a sudden illness that these men had come for Dickson.

Yarbin helped me. We detained the pair with refreshment for a quarter of an hour. Meanwhile a messenger was sent ahead to Galbraith, explaining the situation.

In the valley, I left Teck and Morgan with Galbraith, who had welcomed us cordially, and sought the Dicksons, who had hurriedly been ensconced in the Vatican, rarely entered by any one save the Chief. This was the heart of Tropicania's defense, the arsenal and storehouse and treasure-house. Entering the ruin, I found Dickson pacing in the gloom. The woman was calm. She sat on a stone in the midst of the stacked rifles and waited for me to speak.

"It was only a sudden suspicion," said I.

The two came close to me. It was a queer moment. I was fond of them. Dickson was a real chap, in spite of his—whatever it was. And the woman had brought me the first letters. From the first, she had liked me, liked to have the man with me. . . .

Another thing, the pair seemed to be getting along so well together, far better than at first. They had not been adjusted to each other when I encountered them in Libertad; rather, they seemed to have just met from far ways of misfortune. Each had lived hard—and had plunged. Something big had come to them, while they were hiding and working together.

"Granting that they want me—and somehow I've got the shot that it's so," Dickson said—"what are we to do—go or stay?"

I saw a way, but did not speak yet.

"Galbraith has been using up my currency," Dickson confided. "It has come in handy to him. I've got the stuff in gold, but we can't be turned loose in the mountains with a lot of gold."

I think the woman saw my idea now, and her face grew whiter.

Dickson went on: "The money came hard. We've paid the price. Here we can help Galbraith fight for it. Away from here—driven around the mountains—around the world—we could n't be sure. Nobody could. But it's a tough venture. Galbraith may lose—and all but a few thousand of mine would go. . . . I'd meet him some time, and all he could say would be, 'I'm sorry, Dickson—but it all went!'"

It became painful, following Dickson's fears. I saw how he had suffered.

"Galbraith is on the level," I said. "It's a fight to the death with him for your interests—for mine—for every man who has cast his labor or his earnings into this big pool. We can hold off an army; but at the last, we've got to get out of South America with the bullion—and that's what looks like the hard trick to me. . . . Yet, somehow, we've all learned to trust the old Master. When it looks blackest, he turns a new trick and the air is clear again. We've all seen him do this—one big one before you came—" I pointed to the stacked rifles. "He had that planned three months before it was pulled off—and we had all given up our last hope."

I was panting with my earnestness to enforce the squareness of Galbraith, to change the dull hopelessness in the eyes of the woman, and to steady Dickson's nerve. . . . Just now Dickson saw what I had in mind.

"You'll have to stay, Lillian. Yes, that's it! You stay here—and I'll do the vanishing act until things are quieter—"

"No," she said. "I thought of that, but turned it down. . . . If Galbraith thinks we'd better light out, we'll go as we came—together."

"He is n't well," she whispered to me. "He's all nerve and a lion in a scrap, but this waiting, hiding—this slow stuff—it's got him! He'd break, but for me. . . . You run along and find out how Galbraith stands on the matter—and hurry back!"

I nodded. It was more than ever great and deep to me—the light that a woman brings to a man's mismanagement, when she loves him.

XIII.

MORGAN and Teck were after Movrill, alias Dickson. They told Galbraith, who treated them courteously, and showed them over Tropicana. The second night after their arrival, an interesting conversation took place in Headquarters. . . . Teck had proved the spokesman of the pair, and was saying:

"This fellow Movrill is here—and he's called Dickson. Moreover, he's got a woman with him. You're hiding them, Galbraith, and, so far as I can see, your position here is n't one that entitles you to get America—I mean North America—the States—after you."

I turned to the old Master. He was lying on his cot, his white, wasted hand covering his eyes. His mouth and nostrils might have been those of a dead man—so white they were. His courage had never ceased to thrill me. All that Teck said (with Morgan smiling sourly behind him) struck me as hard world's-truth.

"It is thus that my loves have died," came slowly from Galbraith's ashen lips.

"Huh?" broke from Teck; and from Morgan, "Huh?" They sat on the edge of their chairs. Morgan's hands gripped his knees. Teck twirled his hat nervously.

"If North America wishes to come and get this man whom you say is here, but whom you can't find, I'll be glad to entertain North America," Galbraith said presently.

Teck whitened and Morgan turned evil.

"It will be like the mountain coming to Mahomet," Galbraith added. "The fact is, I could use North America."

Morgan now spoke. "We came here and made no secret about what we wanted. We took it you were straight, in spite of what we heard on the way. We've got you—what's the use of writhing and talking big?"

Teck arose, walked to the edge of Galbraith's cot, and said in a low tone, "I'll tell you what I'll do: I'll shut up—if you'll let us search the Vatican to-night!"

Galbraith appeared perturbed. "Nonsense, the place is n't adequately lit. You could n't do it justice after dark. And I'm sure the men would n't like it."

Teck turned to his companion. Black clouds had settled upon my understanding.

"You're mighty particular about your men, all of a sudden," said Morgan. "We're out here for Dickson, remember that! We'll get him if we have to hang on to the finish, or get Ecuador and Peru to help us."

"And North America."

Galbraith's coolness blunted Morgan's tendency to bluster, as he added, "We'll get the pair if they're turned loose. Sure—we could go through the church—in a day or two. But we'd catch 'em with the goods to-night."

"Tom, if these gentlemen must see the Vatican to-night, go with them—but do be careful with the lanterns. There's a lot of powder there. . . . I'm sorry I can't go with you," he added in apology.

An analysis of my sensations could not be compressed into a page. The fact that I obeyed is enough; and yet every sense of mine was straining for some token of deeper understanding. I was Peter craving before the Lord for a sign. . . . None was offered, and I left Headquarters with nothing in my consciousness save the mild, tired glance of the sick man. . . . I explained to the sentry at the Vatican door, and we were admitted.

Teck and Morgan now suffered the pangs of reaction. They feared a trick—even imprisonment—but dared not withdraw. I shared the

thought—that Teck and Morgan were to be jugged in stone; that I was an escort to prospective prisoners, and must trust Galbraith to detach me at the proper time. . . . But this is artificial tension!

Dickson and his wife were not in the Vatican—only tiers and stacks of rifles, ammunition-boxes, the big pair of mountain bull-dogs, and other properties. The search lasted for a quarter of an hour. The two would have looked longer, but for the growing feeling that they might not be allowed exit as cheerfully as entrance.

The outer door opened at my first signal. We walked back to Headquarters without words. . . . Alone with Galbraith that night, I waited for him to speak; and at length, in the silence, arose to go to my cot.

"Tom," he said, halting me, "you don't think I'm using you right, do you?"

"Yes," I answered. "Only now and then, when I find myself in the dark—quite as much in the dark, for instance, as these two mouthy man-hunters—I get the idea that you are a little afraid to trust me."

"It is n't so, Tom. Not a bit so. But I can't bring myself to show my hand. Again and again I've done it—and lost. It's superstition. It's the game to win or lose here; the game to get away after we've got all the gold we want. And that's not far off. I'd trust you with my life. Why, I'm trusting to you the life of our Mary—but I can't let go to any one these poor fortunes of Tropicania—unless I should be passing out. . . . You'll know all, in that event. The whole plan, the whole campaign, goes to you. The papers connected are written. I carry them night and day."

"Is that the only reason—just this superstition?"

"Well," he said, with a smile, "there is another reason. . . . But as for you—you're all I could ask. The more I think of it, the more I see—that's a whole lot."

The next morning, I was passing behind the picket-line, temporarily stretched on the slope before the Vatican, when I noticed a cartridge upturned in the mud, and stooped to pick it up. I must have been thinking deeply, for the existence of the mules was for the moment out of my world. . . . An instant's picture of a savage little gray beast, her head veered about to me, the white of her eyes as she strained against the halter-shank, and a sudden obliteration of sunlight!

She had levelled a hind-foot at my head, and all but struck twelve. . . . I was in the coolness and dark, and voices reached me. Again and again, waves carried me to some point where the voices began to contain words for my understanding—when I would lose grasp and sink once more. Finally, I drew close enough to the border-land to sense the presence of Mary Galbraith. Even then the unreality of it

obtruded, but I put it away to live the happiness in full. . . . She was very close and whispering, her lips close to mine—an unspeakable rapture, her nearness. . . . I did not understand her words, nor wish to. I feared to open my eyes lest the illusion vanish. There was something finished in the peace and delight of this self-deception and the curious detail and delicacy of it all. . . . At last I heard Galbraith say softly:

“He’s all right, dear, and coming to. . . . Better run back now—unless—”

“Yes, yes—but tell me everything—”

I felt a breath upon my cheek. I seemed then to open my eyes—but moments must have passed. When I could actually use my material senses—only Galbraith was there.

They had taken me to the Vatican. We were alone.

“It was a squeak, Tom, my son,” he said. “She just grazed you—”

I stared at him for long.

“Just creased,” he added, “but when I first got to you, I thought you were stove in. . . . It’s a happy day, Tom.”

“I surely had a pretty dream,” I answered, and fell to recalling it piece by piece.

XIV.

THE little gray mule was n’t shod—all thanks to that. There is a scar above my temple, where a man’s hair is first to whiten. And there was a forty-eight-hour headache—and the rest was the vision that had come and left no trace. . . . That same afternoon I went back alone to the Vatican, Galbraith smiling as I left. There was no fallen handkerchief, no flower lying on the dustless stone pavement of the ancient ruin; not so much as the pressure of a woman’s heel.

I had heard of a sudden terrible need, a closeness to death, calling the spirit of a loved one across the world. These things are traditions of soldiers—and their mothers. . . . But as the hours drew on, I think my baser faculties clutched more closely the illusion of it all.

Three weeks after my glancing concussion with the old gray’s hoof, Galbraith beckoned me to the side of his cot. It was night.

“Tom,” he said, “can we rely upon Yarbin?”

“Absolutely.”

“Good! Then I shall leave him in command of the fighting-end. . . . The time has come,” Galbraith went on, “when we must dispose of the sands of Pactolus.”

“Meaning gold,” said I.

“Exactly. It’s a long, hard journey, and will require at the outside, counting for small delays, eight weeks. You are to take my place

here. You are to be Galbraith. Viringhy goes with me, also Leek, also fifty men who will not come back. I leave Yarbin because he is the more valuable soldier."

"And I——?"

"Because you are the best man to take my place. You have brought me something more than you know—something to hold fast to besides gold, since poor Santell went out. . . . To-morrow I shall talk with the men."

"Vivera is waiting for you to start something in the way of getting the gold out!"

"If Yarbin does his part, holding the Pass, Vivera will never know that the gold, nor the party of fifty, has left Tropicania."

I believed him against what seemed absolutely contrary knowledge. "I had to have a complete deck of trick cards before I began. I have n't played them all yet," he continued, and he pressed my shoulder affectionately.

Now follow in part the most important details of the old Master's plan.

"In ten days my steamer, the *Alcyone*, will be waiting for us at the mouth of the Rio Clara—a hundred and fifty miles down the coast. It's the same steamer that occupied Vivera at the Headland—while the mule-train came over the Pass with ammunition. She's a neat and new little packet. . . . She'll take us up to California, probably San Diego. There will be two weeks there making the assay, establishing a Tropicania office, paying off the men. I'll leave Leek in charge there, and steam back to the Clara and here. The gold already converted into money will be divided among my men. Each man shall have paper representing his shares, cashable at our California office. Meanwhile, the new gold will be ready, and we'll hang on as long as we care to, before making a final getaway. The ship will wait for us. . . . That's the whole proposition—except getting the second party down to the Clara."

"Will Dickson go with you?"

"No; he's safer where he is—and drawing rich interest——"

I wondered at this, believing Teck and Morgan outside with Vivera.

"I shall leave you papers covering everything. They are carefully written."

"But you are n't in shape—not physically fit for such a journey!"

"You don't know the old man, Tom. I shall do my part."

The next day marked a quiet rush of preparations. Galbraith talked to the men singly and in company. The answer in the main was silence and good faith. I marvelled at Galbraith's influence, since they permitted him to leave the valley with a year's gold. The selection of the fifty was a complicated process requiring a forenoon. . . . That night

at dusk, the party gathered in the Vatican. Yarbin was at the Pass. I was left in the valley with the packet of Galbraith papers. . . . At ten o'clock, Galbraith sent for me—met me at the door of the Vatican—embraced me in a quick, eager way, and the great iron door shut upon him.

The next morning, when Tropicania was intently set for trouble from Vivera, it was found that our company had vanished. The Vatican was empty. I alone knew the explanation, for my night had been spent in candle-light with the old Master's papers.

Galbraith had gathered good men about him, engineers, mechanical and scientific, and mining experts graduated both from schools and El Dorados around the world. . . . The men working for Galbraith were drawing more than wages. They had an interest in the final settlement. It takes a certain amount of stamina to support a dream of sizable fortune; rather a test of manhood, this. Galbraith was naturally fitted, and possessed the hardening of a life-training, to cope with the spirits of men inflamed with large earnings, restless dreams, and fluent chances. I had not the old Master's life-record of a gamester, absolutely square, for the eyes of the men down in the river-work.

As a subordinate, I had many friends. Now I was sure of none, except Yarbin. Chances favored a reasonably good result of my leadership, on the general tendency of men to sit tight—until the eight weeks elapsed. But if anything happened to detain Galbraith, I felt that I should have a war on my hands.

The departure of Galbraith with fifty men, without disturbing Vivera, started the men to thinking and whispering. . . . There was a way out of the valley which they did not know—and which I knew, *and fifty others knew*. . . . What was to prevent me, or one of the fifty, from throwing the secret to Vivera? The valley would then become a pen of loot and slaughter! . . . Again, their earnings of months—millions—were gone through some secret passage to the outer world. Plainly, here was the essence for thoughts of death and dissolution.

Moreover, I had come late and brought nothing—neither muscle nor expert knowledge nor money. I was one of Galbraith's secrets. . . . It was hard for the miners, many of them gold-poisoned. . . . And each night I took the day's yield of yellow—and the men knew no more of it. I watched with an anxious heart for the day that should end my leadership.

And now to the secret avenue of egress from the Vatican to the outer world. The fourth or western wall of this ancient ruin was the mountain itself, lined with a thin tissue of stone, resembling only in appearance the three great outer walls, whose two corners were massive monoliths; the masonry of which at the base was three feet through. The lower rocks were in many places unmortared, of a size

calculable only in tonnage, and fitted to each other so precisely that a pin could not be driven into the jointures.

The interior of the Vatican was absolutely featureless, except the cistern and the original megalithic monument—a huge, undressed, and honey-combed slab lying horizontally, and flush with the mountain-wall. This was the altar-stone, the very heart of the Quichuan civilization. Here the olden sacrifices had been made to the sun and fire gods. It had not been brought to the Vatican—rather, the latter seemed a temple builded around it.

It was a painstaking manuscript which Galbraith left for me on the night he vanished with the fifty.

First of all, I read how these ancient Peruvians were the greatest road-builders; they moved mountains, tongued and grooved mammoth rocks; preserved a subterranean arcanum for the priests in each temple. The monograph went on to state how granite hills were shaped; how steps and tunnels were made; and dealt intimately with tombs, altars, sundials, terraced fields, sunken gardens, fountains. It described the amazing facility with which the rivers were diverted; and how earthquakes and volcanic eccentricities were turned to use and ornament by these mighty men of the rocks—these masters of the Andes.

All night I had read Galbraith's document. And now to test the directions he had left. I entered the Vatican with awe. The great door was locked behind, and I stood alone before the altar. The sunlight came down through the broken superstructure and fell upon the altar-stone. The altar-rock was waist-high to a man, and was filled with round holes of varied diameters. The document had minutely described this feature, furnishing a chart of these ancient bores. A certain three, marked 3—13—43, in a peculiar system of enumeration, involved the entrance to the secret passage. These were to be filled with water, as nearly as possible at the same time. To fill all, or any other but these three bores, meant failure. The key-pipes were clear in my mind after a moment's study, and the water—in the cistern.

The lining of the west or mountain wall was formed from great panels of trachyte, taller than a man, and three feet wide. In the lower tier were twenty panels. Number Seven from the north was the door of the passage. It was absolutely identical with the others in weathering, and in its unbroken edges. And now I glanced again at the following paragraph of Galbraith's writing:

The big trachyte panel, Number Seven, is hung on a horizontal bronze pin. Unlocked by a certain exact water pressure, the weight of the hand against the lower part of the panel is sufficient to swing it inward, the upward half outward. . . . A pint of water is enough, for each of the three bores, but they must be filled as nearly as possible

at the same time. Then mark forty seconds on your watch, while the water sinks from sight. At the end of this interval, the panel will yield to the pressure of the hand for a space of seven or eight seconds, but not longer. Water placed in any one of the bores other than the three will clog the intricate arrangement of the inner passages in the rock, and no result will be obtained.

And here Galbraith supplied a long personal note, regarding the manner in which this knowledge had been obtained—an extended though mildly interesting story in itself. He touched upon his solitary labor of many days in the Vatican, clearing the group of bores with compressed air, before he had been successful; and how he had brought his bridge-builders from the Pass, to construct the great iron door of this inner defense, and to erect a frame above the cistern.

At last, when the sun had crept from the altar to the eastern wall, I stood where the ancient priests had bent in "sacred" murder over their victims—a vessel of water in my hand and a deep hush pervading my heart. . . . I poured, waited for the second-hand of my watch to mark off the forty seconds—then turned to Panel Seven and rested my knee against the lower part. The great stone swung noiselessly inward. Amply stocked with matches and candles, I glanced behind at the silent, deserted interior of the Vatican, and descended the dark stairway.

XVI.

AND now appeared a vault approximately twenty-five feet square, the floor of which was ten feet below the floor of the Vatican. Before permitting the panel to swing back, I carefully examined the locking mechanism from the inside. The way out was simple as turning a door-knob. Here, I was told to store the daily yield of gold from the Calderon; and here Galbraith had kept the fortune which the fifty took away.

The other door, the inner mountain entrance, I tried sufficiently to find that the door *would* open; and pictured Galbraith laughing at my temptation, thoroughly enjoying this Bluebeard legacy. He did not command me not to explore the mountain, merely said it was for use in case of extremity—such as his failure to return, or the event of Vivera taking the Pass from Yarbin and driving the Tropicaniens into the Vatican.

In truth, I feared the mutiny of the miners more than Yarbin's inability to hold the outer position.

Seven of the eight weeks of Galbraith's calculated absence had passed before I gave way to the growing inclination to pass the inner door of the vault. . . . I felt as never before the temper of the men on the river

work, during this particular forenoon. A current seemed to come to me from each miner; his state of mind to register itself upon mine; until, from the whole company, my sensitiveness was overrun with misery. I was crippled by their suspicion and hatred. . . . More than ever I perceived that Galbraith had made an imprudent choice; that I did n't belong in this post; that to rule well in such a capacity, I must needs have more of that very hardness which Mary Galbraith wished to eliminate. . . . It was in this condition of mind that I found myself at the Vatican and gave way to a protracted desire.

Ten minutes later I was inside the vault with the seven weeks' garnering of Tropicana—and the revolving panel closed from within. The mountain-door opened easily into a broad passage. The breeze that came forth caused me to exchange the candle for a lantern, though I pocketed the former, with plenty of matches.

The air was deliciously cool and fresh, and the sound of running water plain. Here was a tunnel, shaped like the outer door of the Vatican—straight across and narrow at the top (the ancient builders did n't know the arch), ceiled with slabs of stone and broad at the bottom—a matter of ten feet, at least. The walking ledge was several feet above the surface of a running stream. Two could move comfortably abreast, but light was needed to avoid stepping off into unknown depths.

With each step forward, in spite of the fascination I was more largely conscious of the distance and darkness behind. It was difficult to hold fast to the facts: that the passage, in no sense a labyrinth, had endured for centuries; that I had candles and matches in the event of the lantern blowing out; that a touch of the hand would open the door to the vault, and another swing the panel to the Vatican.

The water smelled sweet enough to drink. In ten minutes, I had covered perhaps two hundred yards, constantly amazed by the miracle of this manhandling of great mountains; abased before the toil of these ancient men and their passion for Herculean labor. . . . Now there was a gradual turn to the tunnel, and presently light from ahead.

Swinging my lantern above, I made certain there was no parting of the ways to confuse the return, and hastened forward with fervid steps. I was neither hungry nor spent with thirst; indeed, I had not been a half-hour from the brilliant valley sun; and yet I almost ran—a man thralled in the lure of a great light. I sensed the land, as one who has been long at sea. It was the same fragrance that came to me the first evening on the down-slope to Tropicana. And now the blackness cleared from the water, running back toward the Vatican; and I heard it splashing upon the stones ahead. The narrow, archless ceiling of the passage ended in an abrupt skyward sweep, and the foot-path of the tunnel changed to an ascending ledge on the wall of canyon, small

compared to the Calderon gorge. The sun was still high, the light vivid in the ravine.

For the first time I grasped the conception of these early builders. They had perceived the strategic possibilities of the Pass in its relation to the beautiful valley, now Tropicana; and had sealed the second gorge, preserving the secret through their temple. I pictured the gorge as it had once been, breaking the mountain clear through to the Calderon. They had roofed its bed on the slope to the river, beneath the Vatican—and closed the face of the rift above from the Tropicana side.

And over this wild country ahead—this lost valley—was the way to the sea—the way of Galbraith and the fifty. . . . I ascended the sharp angle, which the trail now assumed upon the wall of the ravine, and halted near the top to rest,—to think out this astonishing business and my relation to it. The silence and the heat impressed me and added to the pervading unreality of the whole experience.

Over the rim of rock I discerned the hidden valley, broader and more sumptuous than Tropicana; and never in my mind was it apart from the mystery of being lost to the world. The little river broke out of its rocky gorge and lay far below, like a demolished silver spring, eccentrically coiled at the roots of impassable mountains—glacial altitudes and massive slopes that faced the morning in green and gold. There was a wonderful olive glow in the distances. The golden silence of the ages was broken into a million marguerites. . . . Again it came to me that all this had been lost to the world, and that Galbraith and the fifty had broken the spell of centuries. The Quichuans had known it. Perhaps hard-pressed in the Tropicana valley, they had fled through their temple—vanished from the face of the earth, in so far as their pursuers were concerned. Hundreds of years afterward, an American gold-hunter was using the fruits of their work to outwit the effete race which followed the terrible builders. . . . I must have fallen into a queer depth of thinking—when the light was struck from my eyes, and for a moment all motor control was taken from me! . . .

"The crows have plucked all our flower-seeds!"

. . . Rigidly I turned at last, stared over the rim of rock to the source of that voice.

Disorder or reality, flesh or spirit,—she was there—Mary Galbraith—standing in a little terraced garden and looking back toward some one as yet invisible.

XVII.

I DID not call to her. If this were madness, I gloried in it. All the evil and complication of Tropicana swept from my mind like a foul dust-storm. I could face the miners now; I could fill the engineers with

new zest, could hold the steam in the dredge and ardor in the hearts of men. . . . She had come to this world of her father—not to shorten the year, but to be near. . . . Her fingers had indeed touched my face in that blackness of Libertad's night. To the far borderlands of consciousness where the accident on the picket-line had cast me, Mary Galbraith's ministrations had followed; and had been withdrawn only when she was certain I was not at the end of vitality. . . .

Into the passage I retreated, my limbs springing with life. . . . The darkness was alive with strange virtues, penetrable to this restored singing consciousness of mine. Pale, lustrous, she had stood on the little terrace among the mountain marguerites. . . .

The eight weeks passed, and Galbraith did not return. I watched Tropicania for the development of the leader inevitable in its growing disaffection. . . . The men had not murmured up to the last night of the eight weeks. On the morning which began the new period, I was pleased to see the work resumed as usual.

At noon, however, Maconachie appeared at Headquarters and sat down without asking permission.

The crux had developed Maconachie. . . . He was a tall young man, lank and brown-haired. He had college'd extensively and could not forget it. He had character—a bit of Scotch which made him a factor to deal with. I doubt if the miners could have chosen a better agent. While he was unyielding, he had the capacity to wait until elements settled, adjusting to his ways. Maconachie was a sort of abutment. He was in the steel business. He did n't drink. He had come to Galbraith needing outdoor work, and could plan a railroad from a pocket-atlas. . . . In his own mind he did not acknowledge my leadership. An older man would have appeared to. Tropicania, I discerned, had become a republic.

"What's the trouble?" I asked.

"The old man has overstayed his leave."

"I appreciate your dropping everything to tell me. And then what?"

"The men don't like it."

"Neither do I. Galbraith likes it least of all. He set out to return by last night. When he fails—well, you know what it says on the back of all transportation contracts—fire, earthquake, storm, and in general the reverses of God's providence—"

"Yes—"

"You are now officially informed—that something of the sort has happened."

Maconachie did not go, however.

"Look here," he said, "what's to prevent you and another small

party of your own choosing going out the same way Galbraith did, and leaving us here like a lot of brood-biddies at Easter-tide?"

"Nothing but the infallible integrity of the Tropicania proposition."

"Then, this Yarbin might fall asleep and let Vivera—"

"Overflow his banks, as it were. . . . True, Mac."

"The men don't like it," he repeated.

"And what do you propose to do about it?"

"Take over the last two months of gold."

I smiled. "The gold here in my hands is but one-fifth of what the old Master took away. It all belongs to us—to Tropicania. The year's work won't stack up very high—if we throw our chance on the big bulk of the fortune—"

Maconachie considered a moment before replying:

"If Galbraith is as good a man as you think, he's not going to forget the main proposition—our year of fighting and mining—because we break training a bit now. What I mean is, if he came back and found Tropicania in our hands instead of yours—if he's honest, it would n't make any difference."

"There's a chance that you are right, Mac," said I.

"A good chance."

"But you forget one thing."

"Yes?"

"That I'm in command."

"The men can overcome that. They don't think Galbraith considered them enough in putting you in command—you and Yarbin. You both came in here on a shoe-string. You just happened."

"The command was a surprise to me—but Yarbin is a leader of men," I said mildly.

"There are those who think that Yarbin was in touch with Vivera," Maconachie offered, regarding me closely.

"I would n't give much for an investment in Tropicania—or even in the lives of the men—if I thought that. I'm staking heart and hand on Yarbin's fighting for us to the last ditch—if he has the chance—and Galbraith, too."

"The trouble is, you're staking nothing but words. You did n't bring a fortune to this game, Ryerson. You did n't bring expert knowledge. You did n't bring even labor. . . . You're a sort of called-of-God proposition—"

"In which case—I like my chance."

Maconachie squinted at me peculiarly, and called in one leg, preparing to rise.

"The men don't like it," he said.

"That sentence is getting to be in the air. And what are the men going to do about it?" I inquired.

"They have n't exactly decided. If you should turn over your command and the gold quietly—now—"

"And so the men see in me nothing—neither money nor learning nor brute force? . . . I wonder what Galbraith saw in me when he gave me command."

"The men think—that's the point, Ryerson—"

"The men are on the point of learning," I remarked—"unless they think it over, and give the old Master a few days of grace."

"A day is all I can promise," said Maconachie, shaking his head.

"And all I can promise is orders from here as usual—until Galbraith or his messengers return. Tell the men that."

"You won't turn over the gold?"

"Precisely—not."

"It's in the Vatican. We can blast there—"

"Yes—and lay open to Vivera the only way of retreating in case of a pinch. You'd never get away with the poor little eight weeks' eke."

"I think we'll get together better than that, Ryerson."

"So do I."

XVIII.

I DID the natural thing, when Maconachie left—mounted a saddle-mule and took my trouble to Yarbin at the Pass. He led me to a high perch in the rocks, and listened with a sullen intentness, making me think repeatedly of an intelligent pit-terrier.

"I'm not sure," Yarbin commented, "but I think I'd have locked up this Maconachie—nipped him for being spokesman of a mutiny."

"I thought of that, but he always salved me a bit after irritating; and then it would be a show-down, to lock up the delegate. Any day may bring the old Master. My main question, Yarbin, is: Have you got the men—your men—so they'll mind you?"

"I've been honin' for a chance like this," said Yarbin. "You can count on my brigade. . . ."

He slapped my knee, and I saw the strong wine of active service in his eyes.

"You're in command here, Yarbin. Maconachie will send his walking delegate here—or come himself. I say, you're in command."

And now it came to me that I was in command in the valley, and that I had been rather soft so far. . . . I thought of the old Master abroad and doing his mightiest, perhaps failing. He might be dead, his ship foundered; or even now he might be back in Lost Valley, the California office established. Every third thought, at least, was of Mary, radiant among the marguerites, and the adorable complaint against the crows! . . . This crisis looked easy in the masterful mood which became

mine, as I rode back to the valley—the tingle of Yarbin's right hand still in mine, and Mary waiting beyond the Vatican.

That night the miners did not bring me the day's yield of gold. This was a sign of aggressiveness which must be answered with force. I sent for Maconachie. He came in and sat down, stretching out his legs.

"Had a bad day down at the river, Mac?" I asked cheerfully.

"No, good day."

"Saving the stuff to surprise Father later?"

"Father seems to anticipate," he laughed.

"In which case you'd better bring it up as usual."

"The men seem to object."

"Cut the men, Mac. If you're taking up their game for them, get down to first-person. I dislike this little shyster tendency of blaming everything on the client. It's your case, Mac. Galbraith will see that."

He winced. Maconachie didn't like the idea of being made an example, in the event of Galbraith's safe return.

"If I don't have the gold down here in three-quarters of an hour," I informed him, "I'll have to regard it as insubordination. We can fight it out after that. Galbraith is square. Yarbin is square. I'm square. Hot tongs can't move me. Dynamite the Vatican—and things will happen that you don't dream of—we're a bunch of rabbits."

Maconachie went away. . . . The gold didn't come. I put on a brace of pistols beneath my coat and walked down to the river.

Dole ran the bar. He called his place the Riverside Drive Inn. Here was the faro layout; and here came certain of the valley women with naturalness. The tension in the valley had lifted the whiskey sale, as tension invariably does. It was obvious that I had more to fear from this than from Maconachie. . . . Dole was a bland and mellow degenerate, with a pride in his hand-grip and noisy good-fellowship. . . .

"Dole," I said suddenly, "send out for Maconachie. I want to hear from the boys, but I want Maconachie about."

The delegate was not far off. Again the long unmuscled legs looped into view.

"Men," said I, "Maconachie is an engineer, and a good one. He's on a salary from Galbraith. As the representative of Galbraith, I object to his using his time as a spreader of contagion—that is, if these few unpleasant symptoms amount to anything."

The miners were gathering. Figures slipped in quietly from the outer dark. It was only where the liquor was apparent that I feared trouble. None of the miners offered to reply, though Maconachie waited before he spoke for them:

"Tropicania is against you, Ryerson—not personally, but as a leader. We think the gold might be put into safer hands. If Galbraith returned to find you out of power and Tropicania running along in

order—it is n't giving me much thought as to his accepting the situation like the gamester he is."

"You all forget that I am master of the situation," I answered coldly. "Galbraith chose me—confided certain inside matters. I still hold these. You can't take the gold of the last eight weeks. I might turn over authority, but I'd feel like a cur myself. And I don't propose to feel so. I'll run this valley until Galbraith comes back, or such time as I think it's best to lead you out."

I raised my hand against the growing murmur.

"My idea of service to Galbraith and to myself does n't include truckling, nor yielding to mob-fear," I added. "You're all right, you fellows, only you don't give the old Master credit for choosing his man. Sit tight for a few days—say ten days—every day making you richer. If the Chief does n't come back within ten days, I'll lead you forth with the gold you have, as quietly as the fifty went—without Vivera knowing until some morning when he wakes up to find the Pass undefended."

My talk made a dent. The men gathered into little knots. They saw they were up against *darkness* in the Vatican. . . . In the muttering I arose, and said to Dole:

"Now's a time when I don't want whiskey running free. Close within an hour, and come up to Headquarters before you open in the morning."

He looked at me peculiarly, as I drew out my watch. I said no more about the day's gold. . . . An hour passed, and Dole had not obeyed. I sent a message to Yarbin, and the next morning, when the opening time was past, and Dole had not come to confer with me as ordered, I sent Yarbin and a dozen men to close the bar.

A small guard was left at the locked door of the Riverside Drive Inn. Dole was brought to me.

"As I understand it," I said, "you're a sort of sutler to this outfit. You have n't any equity in Tropicana?"

"No," he answered sullenly.

"You don't know your business, Dole," I said. "Everybody hates a sutler—officer and man alike hate a sutler. He has n't any shine upon him. He's out for the naked dollar. His only excuse for living is to obey orders. You did n't know this. I'm going to lock you up for the present."

"Yarbin," I said, when we were alone, "how did the men take it?"

"They growled a bit."

"I've got another little job for you—but I think you'll need more men. How many men can you spare from the Pass?"

"The bridge is up," he answered. "The size of the force there is largely a moral dodge."

"You'd better get about fifty men down here within an hour or so—as quietly as you can."

This was done. The miners had n't counted upon the fighting-end being so morbidly fond of Yarbin. I sent the latter down to stop the work on the dredge—until the previous day's yield of gold should be delivered to me at Headquarters. . . . Yarbin left a guard on the dredge and returned to me.

"How did the men take it, Yarbin?" I asked when we were alone.

"They growled a bit," he said with a grin.

XIX.

ON the night that ended the eight weeks of Galbraith's stay, I wrote to his daughter in Lost Valley—straight to her there—explaining how I knew, how I had seen her in the heights, and repeating the sentence I had heard from her lips. . . . A curious power came over me as I wrote, and something of her great meaning to me was expressed—the essence of my life on earth that she was to me. . . . I told her with what a new zeal I had grasped the work in Tropicania, since hearing her voice among the marguerites. In the night, I took this letter through the Vatican and vault and passage, and left it in the gorge, plainly to be seen from the top, pinned with a pennant to a bamboo cane.

. . . What with Maconachie, Dole, and other sullen affairs, I had no chance to make a love-pilgrimage on the next day—the first day of the ninth week; but now, with the dredge and Dole's bar shut down, and Yarbin spread like a fine metal armor over the valley and the Pass, I repaired to the Vatican. My last look from the great iron door still clings queerly to memory—the hushed valley, the silent dredge. . . . The little pennant fluttered in the shining gorge, a letter pinned to it—but not the one I had left! And this time there was no smudged *Libertad* post-mark. . . .

So I knew that I was not mad, and that I was not dead (with my spirit fixed in a strange Tropicania dream, centuries long). . . . From the pages, I looked up through the gorge, and along the trail I once climbed to the vision among the marguerites. Only the silent flaming day! If Mary watched for my coming to the pennant—it was not for me to know. . . . That half-hour, I forgot the valleys and the world of men.

She, too, was greatly troubled now about her father. . . . She had found it impossible to remain in the north, but hoped to be near us without breaking the covenant of the twelve months. She was glad she had come. . . . Yes, she had touched my face over the balcony at

Libertad; had given the letters to Lillian Dickson; had come to the Vatican when I was hurt. Her father had promised first of all to tell her if anything should happen to me, and he had not forgotten on that day. . . . The Dicksons were with her. There was food in abundance. Yes, they had tried to plant a garden. . . . There was six weeks more of our year. She was afraid to alter that—unless something untoward happened. It was our probation time. She had needed it as well as I. It was very wonderful and dear—every day of it—but I was to come to her in any sudden stress or misfortune. . . . “Yes, oh, come to me!” . . . Her father had told her of me. . . . She could not find words to express her happiness and her humility. She was trying to deserve this constant outpouring of goodness.

. . . Such was my letter. I uncovered my head and knelt for a moment on the rocks in homage and happiness. Then I wrote a hasty reply and returned to the valley.

The rest of the day was without significance. I rode to the Pass, which seemed amply guarded, in spite of the detachments which Yarbin had withdrawn. The river was silent. Spirits of all the forgotten and neglected Sabbaths communed there. I knew the evil of idleness, but at no time did I regret my decisions in regard to the Inn and the dredge. A magic strength came to me over the impassable range from Lost Valley—a strange sustaining.

Maconachie himself came and went; he seemed to contain hot inimical fluids, which hurt and pressed for utterance, but could not find the way forth. His position was a hard one. I made it harder because he was young and obstinate, and had consented to be the instrument of the men's evil. He had misjudged me, as had the miners; all had misjudged Yarbin. The soldier in the latter had won his men; his was the stuff of captains. It was enough for the fighting-end that Yarbin obeyed me. The miners seemed to think my sudden hard-handedness was a pose.

The bit of Vatican knowledge in my brain was the most valuable and pertinent *thing* in the works. Naturally, the miners, in strong human need of venting their savagery upon something tangible, chose Maconachie. I let him worry, in no way prodding for the suppressed disorder of his mind. . . .

Yet I did not sleep. . . . Everything was in order at the river property at nine o'clock. Yarbin had left a guard at the dredge and the Inn, and stationed a detachment within easy reach, on the rising trail toward the Pass. He was with this party for the night. . . . As I lay in the darkness, somewhat of a reaction settled, following my various phases of effrontery during the day. . . . At midnight, there was a strangled cry

from my sentry, as if he were garroted from behind, a quick, almost noiseless struggle. I sprang from the cot, seized my pistols, and struck a match. This was precisely the wrong thing to do, but there was no right thing. In the flare, four masked men appeared, and I saw the ugly gleam of their pistols—with mine not raised. . . . I touched the match to the candle, and held my hand steady.

"Hello, here's melodrama!" said I. "Or is it because you hate yourselves that you wear masks?"

They did not answer. The reek of whiskey engulfed me. Now a hoarse voice ordered my guns to the table, and I obeyed. The four closed upon me; the candle was struck out; an arm hooked about my throat from behind, a hand covering my mouth. I was nauseated by the fumes of alcohol. It was as potent to my nostrils as if pure spirit had been poured upon their clothing.

I did not give the men reason for excessive abuse by resisting. The cowardly nature of the whole proceeding disgusted me at first. I declare without a semblance of pride that I was more embarrassed and ashamed than frightened. . . . They gagged me, took the key to the Vatican from my clothing, led me there. There was no sound to arouse Yarkin and his detachment, as we gained the slope to the great iron door. . . . And now others joined the party, which numbered a dozen or more, masked to a man. Then the Vatican was closed from within, and I was helpless in the midst of a drunken crew.

Quite coldly it came over me that I was to be hazed for the secret. Manconachie tried to get in—for his voice I knew—but the men refused. . . . I wondered if this were a game for my ears, and decided it was not. . . . So Maconachie was against this night's work. There was an instant of icy horror of inquisition, as a reeling pair stripped me to the skin above the waist. They removed the gag, bound my hands, and tossed the rope over the upper frame of the cistern, drawing it tightly. Flashes of insane fury passed through me as I felt the first tension, yet I kept my mouth shut. And now the group formed around and sat down in the circle of candle-light. . . . The utter ridiculousness of the picture struck my mind in one of its desperate reflexes. I did not suppress the impulse to laugh aloud.

"You fellows make me think of a lot of dime-novel train-robbers—all masked in my honor."

A voice which I had heard before but could n't identify, chuckled in answer:

"You're pretty fresh yet, but you'll get over that; that is, if you're stubborn about our little request. Of course, if you're nice about it, we won't go no further."

The speaker paused to take a pull at his flask, then resumed:

"Now, Mr. Ryerson, we want the eight weeks' gold and the way out through the Vatican."

"Can you read?" I asked.

"Yes," he said eagerly.

"Can you read what's printed on a man's brain?"

"No, but I think we can stretch it out of you before morning," the unknown one said slowly, and yanked the rope tighter. I lifted weight from my heels to ease the cutting on my wrists.

"It's your only chance," said I, as steadily as possible. Dark red flamed before my eyes. "Your only chance—to trepan for what I know. . . . And all I've got to add before my jaws shut for the night is that the time will come when you fellows will sicken at the thought of a mask and a rope."

And then they all heard my teeth click, as I intended they should—and I said no more. . . .

To describe the next three hours would be purposeless. I learned much about myself and was not mortally hurt, soul nor body. They were afraid—beyond abrasing the surfaces. I think my silence alarmed them; and then, in all justice, they were withheld in part by the growing appreciation of what they were about. The same voices gave a clue to the situation when I was at last on the waving verges of unconsciousness:

"He's the devil. He'll kill himself, and then where'll we be at?"

One lifted a candle to my face, and poked up my eyelid roughly. I think he was frightened at what he saw. I repeat, much was revealed to me about myself. . . . Dawn was in the broken places of the roof when the last stress was brought to bear. I resisted in half-stupor and absolute silence; and with—but I will not tell that, for drunkenness was to blame—they loosed the ropes. I was unconscious for a period of unknown length. The far sound of firing aroused me. I was alone in the Vatican. I arose, almost broken by excruciating pains in my arms and shoulders, and moved to the great door. The firing, which I had supposed a dream, became more and more startling to my faculties—and brought a sudden furious reverse from hatred to happiness. It was like a plunge into a pool of sheer joy. . . . A fight was on at the Pass, and I held the Vatican. . . . If Vivera had surprised the diminished command at the bridge and taken the position, the beasts who had tortured me were penned in the valley.

For ten seconds, at least, I was a slave to this poison. My hand flew along the inner locks of the great door—effectually barring out the miners and Yarbin's soldiers. Yet the last lock had not been shot to place before I knew that I should open the door. Revenge was but another reflex of the savage pain. . . . And now I heard running feet and the spent, husky voice of Maconachie:

"For God's sake, Mr. Ryerson, open the door!"

"What's up, Mac?" I called, though I was already reversing the locks.

"There's a fight on at the Pass—and it sounds nearer. . . . I've gathered the men up for your orders—the drunken lot! For God's sake, open—and take over the command! It's all up, if you don't!" I swung the door and squinted at the gray-red of morning. Maconachie fell back from the sight of me. . . .

"Yes, they thrawned me a bit, Mac. . . . Yes, I know you did n't have anything to do with it. . . . Dole's whiskey——"

"They surprised Yarbin's guard at ten last night and broke into the Inn!" he mumbled hoarsely. . . . Down by the river, the miners were running to and fro, many already started toward us. . . . And now I saw a mule galloping madly on the trail down from the Pass. . . . Maconachie signalled the rider, who was reining toward Headquarters. He reversed his mount like a flash. Fifty feet away, the poor animal, unused to such rowelling and speed, lost her balance in a rut—sprawled and slid with thud and groan. The courier launched forward until the bridle-rein, unrelinquished, brought him whirling to the turf. It was a sensational delivery. . . . Maconachie and I picked up the messenger, whose lips moved and eyes twisted with the torture of a midriff vacuum. It was several seconds before he had air enough to sound the words:

"Vivera has taken the Pass. . . . The men are holding a bit—but must give way. . . . Yarbin has joined them to slow up the retreat, so you fellows will have a chance!"

I ordered the man into the Vatican, sent Maconachie to bring up the miners and women in what order he could, and took the post at the great door, watching the ascending trail to the Pass. . . . I was still dazed.

The mule—the little gray vixen that had creased me—got up, snorted, shook herself, and turned about toward the Pass at a fast walk.

XX.

AND now the miners passed by me, hastening into the Vatican—shuddered and shrank from me, many of them. Shame and fear and nausea twitched upon lip and nostril and eyelid; others, fresh-awakened from stupor, were even more swollen and deathly. I have seen it since where one is rudely aroused from the death of drink—that look of Lazarus newly-called.

It did n't occur until afterward how I must have appeared to them—my face altered from the horrible night and the fainting, my wrists purple and swollen, arms and breast still bare. . . . It was a hideous moment of my life, at best; and yet matters were conducted with scarcely conceivable speed.

" You men who are not too drunk—take rifles and man the nearest trenches—to cover the retreat of our soldiers. Give them something to fall back on. Make a show of reserves to check the rush of Vivera. . . . And you women go in and sit down."

Truly, swiftness was needed. Vivera had swarmed over the Pass, and was driving Yarbin three to one. . . . Maconachie was having food and valuables moved from the settlement, although extensive stores were in the Vatican-vault and beyond. A line was formed on the slope. The eagerness of the miners to obey me now, caught strangely at my heart. . . . Presently I saw Yarbin's men under fire, and crowded down from the Pass.

The morning was bright. The mighty grandeur of the mountain in daybreak was curiously foreign that hour. And after what I had known in the night, of men and myself and the world, the firing seemed a small and silly matter.

For hours, Mary Galbraith was driven from mind by hatred for my persecutors—hatred, a red rending thing that seemed since to have devoured itself. It was true, I did not hate these men now. Maconachie thrilled me with his zeal. His voice through the iron door—a hard man's giving up in great stress—had been all I needed. . . . And some of these who passed into the Vatican; and some who had gone forth into the line—had tortured me. How far was torture from their minds now! . . . And I might have done the cheap thing—repaid them in commonness and revenge! . . . What a different and finer way—to serve and save them! . . . And something came to me this moment from the woman beyond the mountain. I ran out happily to the line.

" Now, fellows," I called, " we want to give Yarbin and the boys a cushion to land on. They're fighting for us—and the Vatican is open and ours. And we've got a getaway that Vivera does n't know."

A cheer was returned from the miners. That cheer choked me to tears—as torture had not done. . . . And the fight was on—the steel singing in our ears.

" Fall back now—easy, my men! . . . There's plenty of time for a last look at the golden river—a last look at the old river and the dredge! . . . Vivera can have it now—and the gold is all *cached* away in the Vatican. . . . And I say, fellows, take a squint at Yarbin doing *his* day's work! . . . The old Master knew a soldier!"

" And he knew the boss of us all," a muffled voice said significantly, " but we did n't——"

" We're all one piece now," I called back, enthralled by the figure of Yarbin, who knew how to charge and how to stand, and, what was harder still for him, how to give way before an enemy. . . . He had disdained to leave his mule, but rode up and down between Vivera and our retreat—an attraction of shots and an inspiration of nerve.

"Keep the door open until the last man is in!" I yelled, turning toward the Vatican; and a moment later I was in the midst of Yarbin's soldiers, breasting through, and swept back with them laughingly. I heard their queer talk under a killing fire. . . . Vivera had formed on the open slopes, and was gaining ground in a business-like way—his troops charging as skirmishers, and dropping to cover and fire every thirty or forty feet. I saw the angle of his forward line of rifles, as it swung to cover Yarbin and his careening mule.

Now it occurred to me that my friend had once soldiered with the attacking party. Vivera would be eager to kill Yarbin. At this instant a shot felled his mule in full stride, and a cheer from the skirmishers answered the fall. Yarbin cut it short by regaining his feet and resuming his inspiration. I bellowed at him:

"Come in, old man,—we're all covered! Everything is safe inside. Come on to breakfast—it's cold with the door open!"

But the blithe ruffian would n't hurry. He had got his men safely home. All but a handful of his kind were covered in the massive walls. I made for the little party—thinking of what it meant to father wilful boys who refused to come in out of a storm. . . . Yarbin had retreated soldier-like—until it came to his own case. He saw me and called, "Go back! I'm all right—I'm coming!"—finishing the sentence from his knees. Again he popped up. And now I think he must have heard a last cry from one of our fallen—for he staggered forward toward a man who was down—bent over him and fell across the prone body. Vivera's point was less than sixty yards away.

I had to have Yarbin. A chap at my side saw I had to have him. . . . My friend, the commander, was grinning up at me, but the man beneath was dead. A hand helped me to lift the smiling one—a steady hand in that murderous swarm. It was Maconachie, who had not left me.

Vivera's men were upon us as we gained the Vatican. I heard the clang of the bullets upon the iron portal—and felt suddenly the whole weight of Yarbin. A dozen hands stretched out to help us in, and the big door slammed upon the new masters of Tropicania.

Maconachie was on his feet with a wound in each arm. The miracle of *my* escape did not occur to me until afterward. The yells of Vivera's men outside, and the silent crowding at hand, were but vague matters of consciousness. . . . I was bending over Yarbin, who had been hit a dozen times.

"It's queer," he said, smiling like a lad grown tired at play, "how the booze can throw you. . . . They got some of Dole's stuff at the Pass last night. Me, Yarbin, sleeping in between—and Tropicania drunk at both ends. . . . Vivera shoved a big bamboo bridge across at dawn—and struck a lot of all-winter sleeps at the Pass. I'll bet he

heard our sentries snore. . . . Queer how the booze threw me down, and I did n't take a drink——”

“Yarbin, old soul, you brought us in beautifully!”

He winced.

“Oh, I know,” said I; “it would have been a lot easier to charge—but it took a soldier to fall back. Only after you got the men within the shadow—you lost interest and forgot yourself——”

“Queer how the old red booze——”

“Yes——”

And just then I saw his forefinger wriggling—as if to beckon me closer.

“Back in St. Louis, there's a little old woman who can use what I've got coming. Tell her I was the original river-water kid—and saved the stuff for her. . . . She'd never got anything, if I did n't croak before there was a chance to blow. . . . I've got to laugh at the booze, after all—how it threw me. . . . And say, Ryerson, we pulled together, did n't——. . . Why don't you get a shirt on?”

That was the last he said.

I remember one of the men coming up with my shirt and blouse. Yet I went about the work coldly. I could n't get it all straight—that Yarbin had crossed over—that just the machine he had fought with was there by the wall, covered. . . . The air was getting close. All Tropicania was packed in the temple—in sickening silence. They were waiting for me.

“Vivera thinks he's got us penned, and won't hurry,” I said to the nearest. “But we must get out of here—at least, all but a guard to keep him guessing. . . . Vivera can't break this iron door without artillery, and it will take time to get a big gun. The dynamite is all stored here. No pipes or cigarettes. Yes, I know how excitement makes one itch for a smoke. . . . Also, there are women present. . . . Fellows,” I went on, raising my voice, “in so far as I'm concerned, there'll be no tales told—when the old Master comes back. Vivera fooled us when they were changing guard at the Pass, and I had called Yarbin down for a conference. There was n't any trouble on the dredge or the river. As for the rest, we'll lay it to old King Alcohol, and we won't be far wrong. . . . Now I'm going to show you the gold and lead you out into daylight—but there are some chores first for a few men to do.”

Water was brought. I opened the panel, and in the vault, before opening the mountain passage, I explained to one of the men that he must carry a message through. This proved unnecessary, however, for no sooner was the door opened into the passage than I heard Dickson calling from the darkness beyond. My people crowded about me, terrified.

Dickson and I met in the blackness. I grasped his hand. He said that Lillian and Miss Galbraith had been alarmed by the firing, which reached them from over the mountain. I sent him back with good cheer. . . . And now I stationed a dozen men in the Vatican, while the gold was carried, through the passage and up the trail, to the place of the vision among the marguerites. The stores, rifles, and ammunition were then taken from the Vatican—all the big essentials except the dynamite.

All that day we toiled, and Vivera was more or less quiet outside. Evidently he meant to give us a taste of confinement and bad air before treating us in usual military fashion, for he sent no envoys to the iron door. . . . At mid-afternoon I ventured to climb the trail—and Mary Galbraith was waiting where she had stood before. . . . She waved at me. That was all—I asked no more. . . .

Late that afternoon, when all the dynamite had been carried from the Vatican into the vault, as I had ordered, I closed the trachyte panel for the last time. Yarbin and others—too many the sacrifice—were in the vault, under the tarpaulins that had covered the gold. . . . And now I detailed three of Maconachie's assistants—explosive-experts—to block the passage. I wanted the very heart of the mountain emptied into it, beyond the possibility of Vivera's getting through, even if he succeeded in wrecking his way into the vault itself.

Maconachie's aides went about the job scientifically, explaining that it would take half the night to get the powder planted. A series of three or four blasts would obliterate the wonder-working of the Quichuans. They appeared to figure the result, more or less exactly, of each blast. . . . Just now a miner hurried in from Lost Valley, with the word that a small party was approaching far down the seaward trail. . . . For an instant, the terror that Vivera knew another way and was flanking possessed me, but gave way to the primary hope in all our hearts. In the sweep of this emotion, I saw Dickson running toward me.

"It's the old Master," he whispered. "Galbraith and eight men. They're carrying him on a litter."

"Go ahead with the big noise stuff," I said to the engineers, and followed Dickson forth.

XXI.

IT was late that night. Mary Galbraith had left her father, and I was alone at the old Master's cot.

"I'd rather not leave here—if you'll stay," he said. "Mary will like the silence, with all the tension gone—until the ship can return again. It will be crowded, this trip. After the bad weather we had off Lower California, I'm—well, I always was a landsman, Tom—I like it here best."

I knew what the old man meant. He had kept his word about preserving vitality to see the end of his work—but there was not much left beside. . . . That tent upon the mountain-side was the hall of a dying emperor to me. . . . The *Alcyone* had been driven hundreds of miles off her course on the way up, and had reached San Diego ten days late—but with her lives and her gold. How Galbraith toiled can be imagined, since his return to Lost Valley had been but three days behind schedule. The office had been established; the assay completed. Each man's allotment for the first and main shipment was in the form of an order, ready to be delivered on the morrow. Leek was in charge at San Diego. The *Alcyone* was once more lying in the mouth of the Clara, ready to carry back the men and treasure. Dickson's currency had been restored.

The terrible Tropicania game was won.

"Dickson and his wife will stay. America is not ready for him yet. Five or six others will be enough to remain here," Galbraith went on. "We shall wait for the *Alcyone* to come again. There are provisions in plenty. It will be a great vacation for me. . . . I'll have a chance to draw a breath of real life—something that has n't to do with gold——"

His eyes held me, seemed to delight in my happiness. . . . Suddenly he caught my hand and held it up to the light, intent upon the thick, blackened wrist. He waited for me to speak. I told him of other things, and he asked nothing. . . .

And now one of the experts assigned to the work at the Vatican came in to report that the powder was planted—three *caches* which would seal forever the inner end of the passage. All this had been explained to Galbraith, who smiled and nodded now. . . . Three times in the next fifteen minutes, we felt the throb of gigantic forces—rending crashes that came up from the gorge like the end of all things. . . . The dawn proved the perfection of the work. . . .

I was not surprised when Maconachie volunteered to stay. The five others who offered were a mysterious attraction to me. Two of these men had been among those very drunk not many hours before; and the voice of one, it always seemed, I had heard in that evil night. . . . But I want no better friends. Many times I have found good men among those who have to be *shown* at first. Some of the hands I took at parting, I like to remember—and the faces of those fellows who did not try to make words work.

The days passed with unnatural swiftness. There was a high light upon them. An hour with Galbraith; a walk with Dickson, or a dinner with Dickson and his Lillian; long talks with Maconachie; an intimate association, bringing out the best of the miners, who had remained against every desire of their hearts; then alone with my thoughts—

hours and hours (during solitary ascents) of gratefulness and restoration.

And mornings and evenings across the mountain-side, from Mary's eminence to mine—the mute waving of hands! . . . Once, we reckoned badly, and I was approaching her father's tent, just as she was coming forth. She smiled and colored—passing on with bowed head. And I did not go to the old Master's cot that time, but up the mountain to the end of trails, where the air began to nip from the snows—alone, to realize the woman's beauty and the miracle of a woman loving a man.

Lillian Dickson tried hard to understand. I doubt if the splendid unbounded creature ever tried so hard to understand anything. But at last she shook her head.

"But she's here, and you're here—and you're dying for each other—"

That was as far as she could go. Mary must have talked to her on many nights. Dickson was interested, but there was the fineness I had always noted, to keep him from speaking. I believed he had a deep appreciation. It was a wonderful time for all. . . . Dickson never told me his trouble. He did not doubt that Teck and Morgan had come into Tropicania with Vivera, though we could not confirm that. The range between the two valleys might as well have been the Pacific. Galbraith planned to take the Dicksons to Honolulu on the final trip north.

We wrote to each other, Mary and I, just short notes. There was little that actually required expression—since we could see each other. In the nights, I would think of her lying very still and looking out at the stars, as I did. . . . Once I found myself giving a grown lad of my own—the secret of happiness. I was half-asleep likely, as I caught myself whispering devoutly: "And when you have found her—when you are very sure you have found her—go away for a year. Say to her that you go to search for a flower that takes root amid loving and dreaming and waiting." . . .

The great Andean peaks were my real companion. I loved their imperial contours, their great ice-packs, and the interstellar stillness. . . . There were times, as the days drew on, when I thought of going to Mary, but the respect for her year prevailed. And at last something strange, but which I knew was excellent, came to me and remained—a stamina that had come before only in my highest moments. The meaning of it was that Mary Galbraith was mine in heart; that even if I never knew her more than now, we were twain; for flesh is but a tithe of the meaning of a great love. And this remained with me—a continuous lustre in the realization, a fresh fineness of patience, a new mastery over self.

The place of this realization became a shrine to me. It was high on the mountain above her tent—to the very end of the possible ascent.

It was there that I found a spring—traced it to a source ice-cold and pure. The very air held a breath of the higher snows. There were fronds about it; and parting the marvellous network of vines and creepers, a Jovian vista across Lost Valley thrilled the heart. In one note to Mary I touched upon this beautiful thing which had come to my consciousness—and the shrine of it, the gushing Spring. Strangely tucked away among the sentences of a later note from her, was a line—that some time I should find her there at the Spring.

. . . There remained but four days of our year. I had passed the afternoon with Mary's father. He seemed poised between the planes of life and death; yet on this visit he told me that the recent weeks had been the happiest of his life. He said there was a different spirit about the memory of poor wayward Santell—and that I had done something to fill the living place. . . .

I returned to my tent as the sun reddened the seaward range. . . . At just the moment (for we never needed words nor watches) I stepped out to look across the slopes where the marguerites had been to her eminence—and she was standing there.

She did not wave to me. It came clearly that instant, as if her thought had been in my mind—that there had come an end to waiting. And now her bare arm lifted toward the snows of the mountain. But even before that exquisite gesture, I knew the four remaining days were a gift of grace to me. A hush was upon my being, as I watched her turn, not to her tent, but to the trail.

. . . I was far behind, climbing with the shadow, as the sun sank oversea. Lost Valley deepened, became mystic with night, but a heavenly glow touched the leaves above. This was my "bright angel trail." . . . Sometimes it seemed as if I were not of flesh, but a spirit, following a brighter spirit, up to the place where the gods had touched a new world into creation. . . . It was the Spring where life began.

Only the best of the old life belonged to me now. . . . I heard the sounding of the great inland sea of my boyhood, and was purified in the breath of the pines. The woman's voice of that night when I told her my love, blended curiously with the voice of my mother. The spirit of things well done lived with me, and all the fever healed, and the cramped places of my heart breathed expansion.

The thin stream from the Spring whispered in low animation, as I climbed along it toward the source. Red and gold wavered from the heights, only the pale lustre of the snows lingering. There was no sound from the Shrine.

I parted the leaves. All was shadow—until the glow from the peaks left my eyes, and I saw her there among the contours of the darkness—still as the Night herself.

THE MAGI AND THE FAERY FOLK

By Edith M. Thomas

WHERE went the gifts the Magi bore
 To Bethlehem Village long of yore?
 As they rode all night through the haunted sands,
 There were whispering voices and touching hands:
 "Give us of that which your panniers hold!"
 Then they who rode to each other spoke:
 "They have followed us forth because of our gold—
 The eager clan of the Faery Folk!"

And the Magi answered those voices in air:
 "The gifts we carry we may not share.
 The myrrh and the gems and the gold from the mine—
 These are all for One—for a Child Divine."
 Oh, then, how the silver laughters ran
 Till they made to quiver the Guiding Star:
 "We will visit, ourselves, this Child of Man,
 We will ask of Him when ye've passed afar!

"All that He hath He will give away—
 In the hands of the world a treasure will lay,
 Treasure so vast, so more than gold,
 That the hands of the world will scarcely hold
 All that He hath for them in store.
 We have no souls, that treasure to share:
 He will give us the lesser—the glittering ore!"
 Laughed the Faery Folk, unseen in air.

Thus, with the touch of asking hands,
 The Magi rode through the haunted sands,
 And silently followed their Guiding Star.
 They gave their gifts, and they passed afar.
 If any came after, there's none to tell,
 And where went their gold is none to say.
 But this of a truth we know full well:
 "*All that He hath He will give away.*"

THE MENACE OF CHINA'S DEVELOPMENT

By Forbes Lindsay

At intervals since the inception of railroad building in China—that is to say, during the last thirty years—writers with more optimism than knowledge have drawn roseate pictures of the great advantages which they assume will accrue to the commercial countries of Europe and America from the development of the resources of the great empire that occupies one-tenth of the earth's surface and contains one-fourth of its population. Since the establishment of the Chinese Republic, this fanciful proposition has been more frequently advanced than ever before. The latest effusion of the kind is from the pen of Dr. Wu Ting Fang, formerly Minister from China to the United States.

These sanguine writers are correct in their promise that China has practically unlimited resources of material and labor. It is doubtless true, as Von Richthofen asserts, that the coal measures of the Province of Shan-si alone are sufficiently extensive to supply the demands of the world for several thousand years to come; that the adjacent fields of iron ore would keep every existent rolling-mill running for centuries; that Manchuria might be made to produce more wheat than the largest crop of the United States; and, in short, that under complete development China and her dependencies would be capable of providing all other peoples with nearly everything that they might need.

The fallacy lies in the deduction that these resources may be exploited chiefly for the benefit of foreigners; that the Chinese will be satisfied to produce and export raw materials, taking in exchange the finished products of America and Europe. Dr. Wu, an exceptionally intelligent and well-informed Chinaman, falls into this error, but in his case we may make allowance for a characteristically amiable desire to say what he thinks his readers will be pleased to hear. He predicts a growing demand on the part of his countrymen for western luxuries, but fails to tell us how they are to pay for these unaccustomed things. He expresses the belief that with the changing fashion in hair will come a new fashion in head-gear; and that millions of caps will be required by queueless Chinamen every year. He intimates that these will be bought from foreign manufacturers, but does not give any reason why the Chinese should not make them, just as they make their present hats.

As a matter of fact, there is every ground for believing that the China of the future, in its relation to the world at large, will figure much more prominently as a competitor than as a customer. This view of the matter was taken by Mr. J. J. Hill some years ago, when he stated that, unless the American laborer shall moderate his standard of living in the meanwhile, he may expect to be driven to the wall by the productions of Chinese workmen. The possibilities of the future are foreshadowed even thus early in the developments of the present. The Han-Yang Iron and Steel Works employs four thousand men. Its output is produced much more cheaply than the same material can be made in America. Charles M. Schwab testified within the year before a Senate Committee that he can import Chinese pig-iron to his plant in San Francisco more economically than he can supply it from his own mills in Pennsylvania. But for the tariff bar, the Chinese would export the finished product to the United States, and Mr. Schwab's factory would find itself unable to compete with the Hang-Yang Works, from which steel rails, armor-plate, and similar products are being put out.

Dr. Wu states:

The Chinese nature is not much different from that of other human beings. What at first is a luxury soon becomes a necessity in China, as elsewhere. I have seen this demonstrated in Shanghai, where at present I make my home, over and over again.

The mistake here is in holding up the Chinese of the treaty ports as representatives of the population at large. The fact that the former are showing some inclination toward the possession of luxuries is no indication that the vast hordes of Chinese wringing a bare living from the land will fall into line; nor that the ingrained disposition of the Chinaman to despise and dispense with non-essentials will easily give place to an inclination for the enjoyment of them. The fact that recent years have witnessed large importations into China of articles which the people never before used rather emphasizes than contradicts this statement. The Chinaman will respond to the offer of something calculated to promote his convenience or to serve a useful purpose. He is buying kerosene and cheap watches in large quantities and numbers, but he has not been induced to purchase expensive lamps or gold watch-chains. American millers have established an extensive market for flour in China, but it has not been accompanied by a demand for fancy biscuits. In late years the Chinese have recognized the food value of sugar, but they are not importing it in the form of candy. Even these successes of foreign exporters have been secured only after half a century of persistent effort, during which time they have, with less endeavor, made greater inroads into much smaller markets.

It may be taken for granted, as quite consistent with the situation

and the characteristics of the people, that if they acquire a desire for these superfluous things, they will set to and make them for themselves. It is hardly necessary to state that the wonderful adaptability and the extraordinary intelligence of the Chinaman render him equal to the task of producing anything which we may have to offer him. A sign that may be seen in the city of Shanghai reads,

Furnaces and umbrellas mended. Any mortal thing can do.

There is a world of significance in this advertisement. It truthfully sets forth the infinite resourcefulness and self-confidence of the Chinaman.

China has a vast surplus of labor. Its population of over four hundred millions is compressed into eighteen provinces, each of which has at least seventy inhabitants to the square mile. Thirteen of these provinces contain over four hundred souls to the square mile, and in one the density is over six hundred persons in the same area. The country contains scores of great cities, and large towns innumerable. In the Swatow district, one hundred and fifty miles long by fifty miles wide, are to be found ten walled cities with populations of from forty thousand to two hundred and fifty thousand, besides hundreds of villages and towns whose inhabitants number twenty thousand or more. This enormous population supports itself by agriculture, and supplies its needs by domestic manufactures. It has been said that if you will give a Chinaman one foot of earth and a quart of water he will make something grow. Despite the primitive methods, nowhere else on earth is agriculture made so effective. Holdings of one-twentieth of an acre are common, and by far the majority do not exceed one acre.

What will be the probable result of the application of capital to the resources of such a country, and the extension of railroads through it? Is it to be supposed, as some writers would have us believe, that a small proportion of this vast, struggling, surplus labor will devote itself to the production of the raw materials of commerce, to be shipped to manufacturing nations, while the great majority shall remain content to pursue their present precarious modes of living? And if such should be the case, what is to support the railroads, of which six thousand miles are now in existence, with an equal mileage in prospect? Surely the transportation of the output of the coal and iron mines will not suffice; yet there would be no other source of business to justify the contemplated railroad extension.

In considering this question, there are two or three basic facts which may not be lost to sight. Measured by purchasing power, the Chinese are a nation of extremely poor people. For many centuries they have sustained a severe struggle for existence. In the course of this time, it has of necessity become an inherited habit with them to disregard non-essentials. Emulation is a stimulus of which they have no knowledge.

Their only incentive to effort is the primitive prompting of self-preservation. They know nothing of, nor ever have known, what Veblen calls "the wasteful extravagance of western life." They despise it, and, as a rule, even when it is within their means, do not indulge in it. Witness the members of the Chinese colonies in our Pacific Coast cities, many of them born upon American soil and in constant touch since their birth with American civilization. Their earnings are considerably greater, and their savings immeasurably larger, than those of the average laborer in the same communities. Nevertheless, the Chinaman of San Francisco or Los Angeles lives in well-nigh equal simplicity with the Chinaman of Canton or Peking. In China itself this national characteristic is highly marked. Among the Chinese there is no fashion in dress. The man of rank is mainly distinguished by a button or a belt. His residence is restricted in form and capacity to his requirements. Its contents find justification for their presence in usefulness. He has comparatively little more of the world's goods than the coolie living in the neighboring hut.

Although the Chinaman looks with contempt upon the unnecessary extravagance of western peoples, he is glad enough to profit by it. While he will not commit the folly of wearing a starched shirt, he is willing to launder one for a price. Retaining his own simple fashion in shoes, he engages in the manufacture of more elaborate foot-wear for foolish customers. He makes the most enticing lingerie for American ladies, but does not supply it to his own womenfolk. Everywhere in the world the Chinaman has proved himself ready to take advantage of the commercial conditions and of the opportunities for trade in foreign luxuries, but this without himself becoming contaminated with the desire for them. If, however, a change in this respect should occur, which there is no good reason for anticipating, it is safe to say that the Chinaman, who is an economist of the highest order, will not be slow to see the benefit to himself in supplying his wants by domestic manufacture, rather than by purchase from foreigners.

In short, all the facts in the case seem to point to a conclusion contrary from that at which so many sanguine writers upon the future China arrive. This great country is on the eve of a boundless development. Its untold mineral resources will shortly be exploited. But at the same time its greatest resource, that of unlimited cheap labor, will also find a field for effort. If at first this stupendous store of available energy is devoted to mere mining industries, it will not be long before its extension to manufactures, for the purpose of meeting the needs of home consumption. From this it will be an inevitable step to the production of fabrics for exportation. When the day arrives, and it may not be distant, that China exports the products of her own factories in her own ships to the markets of Europe and America, the white laborer will be reduced to sorry straits in the competition. And no laborer will suffer to the degree that will

the American, whose highly artificial standard of living renders him incapable of competing with a people who will be making much and consuming little.

ALL IN A COACH AND FOUR

BY ELLA WHEELER WILCOX

THE quality folk went riding by,
All in a coach and four,
And pretty Annette, in a calico gown,
(Bringing her marketing things from town,) M
Stopped short with her Sunday store,
And wondered if ever it should betide
That she in a long-plumed hat would ride
Away in a coach and four.

A Lord there was, oh, a lonely soul,
There in the coach and four;
His years were young but his heart was old,
And he hated his coaches and hated his gold
(Those things which we all adore).
And he thought how sweet it would be to trudge
Along with that fair little country drudge,
And away from his coach and four.

And so next day he went riding back,
All with his coach and four,
And he went each day, whether dry or wet,
Till he married the sweet little maid Annette
(In spite of her lack of lore).
But they did n't trudge off on foot together,
For he bought her a hat with a long, long feather,
And they rode in the coach and four.

Now, a thing like this could happen, we know,
All in a coach and four;
But the fact of it is, 'twixt me and you,
There is n't a word of the story true
(Pardon I do implore).
It is only a foolish and fanciful song
That came to me as I rode along,
All in a coach and four.

MERCEDES THE MIND-READER

By Edna Kenton

"MERCEDES" walked into her unspeakable dressing-room off of a remodelled bar-room that had been turned into a painted and gilded "Dreamland," and stared about her angrily as she flung off her coat and cheap furs, and dragged from its nail a weak imitation of an Andalusian dress in red and gold and black, with its sash and mantilla. "Mercedes the Mind-Reader," featured on the bills outside, was in reality Miss Mercedes Martin, with legitimate stage aspirations, reduced by the pressure of hard circumstance not only to the vaudeville stage, but to the extreme limbo of the "six-a-day." She appeared in the five- and ten-cent shows scattered over the city, and her only good fortune in six months had been the thin streak of luck that gave her enough continuous engagements between Fourteenth Street and the Bronx to keep her on in the city of her heart.

Miss Martin's co-laborer was a young man whom she had met the summer before, in an actors' boarding-house. He was neither playwright nor budding actor, but had "barked" at a small Coney Island show long enough to make him enamored of "the profession." Unfortunately, he had been let out to make room for a nepotic successor, the brother of the manager, and while scouring Fourteenth Street for another job had run across an act that gave him an idea. But it required a helper, and his mind turned instinctively to the girl who had sat at his table all through the hot, hopeless summer. Over the stewed beef and boiled potatoes and soggy puddings of the daily dinner menu, they had talked, each cherishing a secret and unsuspected pity for the other's limitations, and finally, driven by that congeniality of need and supply that often outranks spiritual *rapprochement*, they joined forces, and together became "Mercedes the Mind-Reader." Barney had been enthusiastic over their prospects, but so far they had climbed no higher than the round on which they started. Each of them, however, had contrived to eke out a living, and after her brief six months' experience in the fooling of a willing public, "Mercedes the Mind-Reader" was freed forever from the thraldom of any last lingering superstition.

"Thirteen at a table, the moon full face, right, or left; a black cat

in the dark of the moon in a graveyard—anything!" said Miss Martin grimly.

She cast off her street clothes and was almost dressed in her stage gauds when a knock sounded and Barney's sleek, oiled head was pushed through the doorway.

"Say," he began gently—he was a street-reared youth with the poise of the streets athwart him, but though he had browbeaten cops and feared no man he shrank now and then from the glare in Miss Martin's eyes—"say, have you got last night's batch o' questions answered yet? They 's two girls an' three men out there a'ready, callin' for 'em."

His partner's eyes blazed. "My heavens, no!" she uttered harshly. "I 'm near dead as it is, an' that part of the game 'll have to be cut out quick! I never saw such marks! Dozens of 'em, writin' down their silly questions, and then hangin' round the box-office all day long to get their answers! I 've come down here a good hour 'n' a half before my turn to get this lot cleared away, and then get jumped on before I get a full breath! Now, you clear out, and when I 'm ready I 'll send a batch out front, and don't you nor anybody else bother me again!"

She slammed the door, and sat militantly down to her hated task. As she had said, there were dozens of letters, all of them addressed to "Mercedes," for which the writers of the questions enclosed had paid ten cents each, and whose answers were to be left for the writers at the box-office. It was a nice little side-game, but it took time and clever phrasing, and when one is sick of life and one's work, one does not feel clever. But with a sniff of disgust she braced herself to her hated work.

She answered five questions within three minutes; one from a woman: "Is my husband still in love with me?" by "He loves you more than you think;" another from a woman: "Does my husband love any other woman?" by "Your husband loves you more than any one else;" and one from a man: "Will I get a raise any time soon?" by "Your employer is only waiting to be sure you are a good worker." She sealed them vengefully in the self-addressed envelopes, and picked up the fourth one.

"Do I put money on Sunshine or on Lady Grey?" she read. Like an automaton, "Mercedes" wrote her answer: "Put your money in the nearest savings-bank to-morrow—you will never regret it;" then she slipped it in the addressed envelope, and rubbed her fist over the addressed side to seal it more firmly. By the merest accident, her lustreless eye read the address, and after a bit her dulled brain began to work—then she bent forward like a dog on the scent.

"Why, it ain't *possible!*!" she breathed. But she tore open the dampened flap with nervous fingers, and, after staring at the name again, began to write a different reply. Then she resealed the envelope,

and, opening the door, called imperiously, "Tommy!" When the orchestra leader's young son arrived, breathless, she handed him the single envelope. "Take it to the box-office, quick!" she said.

She shut the door with a half-scared look on her face. "Now what 'll I do?" she asked herself, beginning mechanically to cut the remaining envelopes that lay on her dressing-table. "Hocus-pocus or straight! It 's a ten to one shot either way, an' maybe he ain't the man! But if he is—oh, Lord!"

She turned sharply as a knock sounded at her door. "I told you, Barney—" she began, but the door did not open. "*Come in!*" she screamed.

"I told you—" she began again, and in her mirror caught sight of the intruder. "Is it—ain't it—" Her swift brain worked like a shuttle—"three men out there callin' for their answers"—and she turned toward the strange young man with her mind made up.

"You 're Dick Freek," she remarked affirmatively, and knew instantly that he was. Her quick glance had told her much, for these last six months had given her a fund of informative detail from which to draw many quick-witted conclusions. Already she had perceived that this youth was proud and sullen and stubborn, and withal uncertain of himself and of the world. He was black-haired and blue-eyed, and well-enough dressed, after a showy fashion. He had paid ten cents for a question card, but he was rather ashamed of it, and, more than half-believing, was determined to show, for what it was worth of *savoir faire*, his sullen doubt.

"It 's a straightaway and no choice," said Miss Martin to herself. "No time to cook up any snare, an', any way, he 's primed—or thinks he is!"

"You said to come back and have a personal talk about that question," the young man said, staring at her with a furtive boldness. The mind-reader nodded and sat down on the edge of her dressing-table, motioning her caller to the only chair the room held. She picked up a nail-polisher, and began to work definitely at her hands, but suddenly she raised her head and stared straight into the young fellow's eyes. Startled though he was, he did not avert them, and gazed clearly, although defiantly, back. She held the gaze for almost a moment; then she waved a careless hand and nodded.

"Well, I don't know much about you, Mr. Freek, though I could make you think I knew a lot. But though your clothes are flashy, and that stud pure glass, and the ring washed gold, you can look a woman in the eye. Now, forget what you came back here with, a lot of hepness to the whole world; because, honest, you don't know a thing about this stunt o' mine, do you?"

"Well, I know it 's a trick all right," the young man flung back.

"Drop the hepness," begged the mind-reader good-naturedly. "If you knew it was rot, you was a fool, was n't you, to give up a good dime on a chance I could tell you how to beat the bookies? If I could do that, I 'd be whalin' 'em. You 're right; it 's a trick—only, you don't know it. Now, do you?"

"Well," ventured the young man after a pause, "it 's a blame' good one. Say, I don't see how you work it, anyhow. He, down there in the audience, don't ask you more'n a question or two, but you 're right there with the answer, an' blindfolded at that!"

"Well, now," volunteered Miss Martin, busy with the thumb-nail of her right hand, "if my pardner knew what I was up to, he 'd break the contract, and I 'd be out of a job. But I hate to see a young feller start into gambling, an' when he tries to mix gambling and mind-reading, God help him! You see, you say you don't believe, but you do! Here 's the answer I wrote you out first; then I got to thinkin'—a lot o' women in the business ain't got the conscience I 'm developing—and I thought: 'Here 's a young man that probably, if he was once put wise to a lot he could n't be expected to know about, 'd be able to talk back to all the fakers, an' when they tried to nail him, tell 'em all to go to hades!' So I asked you to step back behind," she added simply.

"Now," she continued capably, "my game's *easy*. See here: A is H, and B is T, and C is S, and D is G," she rattled through the tossed-up alphabet. "Now, I don't never pay any attention to anything but the first letter of the first word in each sentence Barney hands me. Like your name. If F is E, and R is M, and E is F, and K is 'Pray,' and 'Hurry' means 'Repeat last letter,' then, if he takes your name, and says to me: 'Easy now. Make haste. Faster. *Hurry*. Pray tell me this name,' why, that spells F-r-e-e-k, even if I never did hear of the name before. Sure, you 're fallin' to the whole scheme; learn the new alphabet like it was the old one, and you 're all right."

"Now, take dates. What year was you born in? Good: 1886. You hand that to Barney down in the audience. Now, if one is 'Say' or 'Speak,' and eight is 'Are' or 'Ain't,' and 'Well' means 'Repeat last number, and six is 'What,' and he says to me: 'Say this number. Are you ready? Well? What is the number?' why, it 's 1886, an' nothing else."

"Well, I am —," said the young man earnestly, gazing at his hasty notes, and looking from them to "Mercedes" and back again.

"Of course the trick of the thing lies in the way Barney rattles it off all run together," the mind-reader went on, watching her victim like a hawk. "Then," she added casually, "there are the tables, in sets of ten each, of coins, and articles of dress, and colors, and jewels, and lodge pins, and watches, and all. Each set 's got a question that tells

what group of ten articles it is—the other question he asks gives the number in the set. For instance, ‘What article is this?’ means wearing-apparel set, and ‘What is this?’ means jewelry set. If ‘Glove’ is number three in the first set, and three is ‘Can,’ why, when he says, ‘*What article is this? Can you tell me?*’ it’s a glove, see? And if ‘Bracelet’ is third in the second set, ‘*What is this? Can you tell me?*’ is that cue, and that’s all there is to all of it.”

“Well, can you beat it!” murmured the young man. “Then, it’s all of it tricks, spirits and all?”

“And most of it poor tricks,” agreed Miss Martin. “For instance, again: At the sixteenth-rate show where we first got our idea of our act, a violinist in front of us got out his ‘mute’ and handed it to the audience man. He was stupid and had to ask what it was. Then he spelled by ear: ‘*Oh, here. Look. Please hurry!*’ he said to her. Of course, since M is O, and U is ‘Look,’ and T is P, that’s m-u-t, and she said it loud and clear: ‘It’s a mutt!’ It near raised the roof.”

The young man laughed, but grew keen again. “Last night I handed your pardner a match-box, and you told him what it was. Then he ast you how many matches in it, and you said eighteen. I did n’t know it, and I swear he could n’t, because he was holdin’ it down by his side. But it was eighteen all right. That’s why I wrote you about the gamblin’ tip.”

Miss Martin laughed: “‘*Here is an article*’—clue to the set; five is ‘Will’ or ‘Won’t’—‘*Will you tell what it is?*’ While I was answerin’, he was counting the match-heads with his little finger. One is ‘Say’; eight is ‘are’—‘*Say* how many matches are in it. *Are you ready?*’ Eighteen! Correct, and count ‘em yourself!”

Young Mr. Freek grinned foolishly again, and put another problem: “But I had a question read through a sealed envelope once?”

“Written on a block of parafined paper, pencil-marked sheet underneath copped out and dusted with charcoal back behind, and there it stood out—like a lemon!”

“Written on my own paper,” corrected the young man triumphantly. “Sealed and taken up on the stage, read there and returned to me, still sealed. No chance for crooked work. I watched!”

“Oh, you watched!” his mentor retorted. “Sure you did! Did n’t happen to see that the plate the letters was dropped in was filled with alcohol, eh! Did n’t happen to catch the medium readin’ it while it was wet as easy as if it was tore open! Did n’t notice her wave it round to dry it out! And if you’d happened to smell the alcohol on it later, you’d ‘a’ thought it was your own breath or your neighbor’s, would n’t you? That’s easy. Give me another.”

“It’s my hardest,” said the young man soberly. “What a mutt, for sure!”

"I 'm tellin' you," remarked his hostess cordially, "because I can see you 're like me—you want to know things." It was not subtle flattery, but the subject felt flattered nevertheless.

"I knew it was all humbug," he asserted with a touch of his old defiance.

"If you take it in earnest, sometimes it 's fun—would be always if I did n't catch it serious now and then, in the letters. They 're what turn me sick."

"What all do they ask you about, any way?" he asked, advancing unconsciously to the centre of the web spread for him.

"About racin'!" Miss Martin flung back at him, and he grinned sheepishly. "That is, the men do, or about their jobs, and is they a raise in sight. Women always want to know if their men love 'em. I 've got a stock answer for that: 'He loves you more than you think.' I learned to be that discreet after an awful break I made when I first went into the business. One of my first answers was to a question a stage-hand wrote me: 'Is my wife true to me?' Like a fool, I wrote back: 'As true as you are to her,' thinkin' I 'd put over a bright bit of repartay. Next day he was missin'—jailed! He 'd got to thinkin' that smart alec answer over, and he nearly carved her to pieces that same night! No! Answer all they ask so as to make 'em feel good!—that 's the secret.

"But now and then," she added slowly, "I get a letter that breaks me all up. One came in just a few weeks ago that turned me sick. Say, it was the pitifullest letter—pages! There 's a man she loves more 'n anything on earth. She—why, she just loves him—that 's all. And he 's blew out, Mr. Freek. He 's just cleared out. Was n't he never comin' back? Where, for God's sake, was he gone? It was all she ast to know. She even went so far as to tell me her name—Mary Morse it was—"

"Mercedes the Mind-Reader" was polishing her nails too steadily to be accused of watching the young man's face, but over her hand she saw his hand tighten until the knuckles whitened. Finally, after a long, thick silence, she raised her head, and as she looked straight into his eyes his face began to flush, and his eyes to waver, and finally to fall away. She drew a long, half-hysterical breath, and then she got off the table's edge and stood before him. Her voice had changed; it was low and eager.

"It was a clear miracle, my catching your name at all—I answer 'em without hardly lookin'. But it 's a funny name, and I 'd remembered it from the letter where she 'd wrote it out—with the whole story, Mr. Freek; and I took a long chance that you might be the man, and asked you to step around. I took another, after you got in, in tellin' you God's own truth about my business—I could 'a' fooled you, you

know it! But I took a look an' chanced it. Now I 'm takin' another chance on you keepin' this that 's to come between you and me. I 'd ought to have burned it, but—here, take it; all I want is you should read it——"

She gave a quick look at the cheap clock standing on her table, and began to apply some make-up vigorously, while behind her, his head bent low so she could not see his face in her mirror, the young man read. There was no sound in the room but the rustle of the simple, desperate pages, and the sweat stood out on his forehead when he had finished.

"What did you—— I never had any idea of—— What did you tell her to do?" he asked huskily of the mind-reader's back.

"I told her under no circumstances to run no risks. I told her to buy her a weddin' ring, and go to the Salvation Army—that they 'd see her through. And I was afraid I was a fool, but I told her to go on hopin'—and trustin' some more—to the love she 'd already trusted to——"

The young man reached for his cheap derby and got up. Miss Martin saw him, in her mirror, and she continued to apply her powder scrupulously. More than all else with this sullenly wise youth she feared the word too much. How far she would have let him go in peace no one can tell; with a sinking heart she saw him cross the door-sill. But from the other side he turned and stammered awkwardly:

"Say—it 's easy to see how all this *could* just 'a' *happened*, but honest, ain't it awful queer? Why, if my hat had n't blew off an' rolled up inside them storm-doors outside there last night, I have n't got an idea I 'd have come in to see the show at all. Now, it is queer, ain't it?"

"Honest to goodness," said the mind-reader, "it 's awful queer." She sprang up, and faced him with so kindly a look in her black eyes that he spoke unspeakable things.

"When I dug out," he stammered, "I did n't mean to play the cad exactly—fact is, I never thought what I *was* playin', I was scared so liver-white at the thought of gettin' *married*. I reckon that don't seem any excuse to you at all; nor even any reason why——"

"I never knew a man," Miss Martin replied comfortingly, "that did n't *want* to run at the last minute—an' look at th' bunch of contented married men that 's walking the town to-day! That 's my cue. Say, you 're goin' down to see her to-night, ain't you?"

The young man put out his hand and gripped hers hard. Then he put on his hat at a new, straighter angle that made him no kin to the young bounder he had seemed an hour earlier.

"Sure!" he said simply.

THE HONOR OF BATTERY B

By Angus Lynne

FORT LONGWORTH, Kansas, is not, by a long shot, the pleasantest spot for a soldier's life. It is a dreary, barren place of sand and dust. The town itself, a collection of brick, wooden, and corrugated-iron shacks at the end of a branch railroad, serves but to accentuate the loneliness of the prairie, and, with its collection of drink-shops, dance-halls, and "dives," is better avoided by any one in search of harmless diversion.

We were a tough lot at the fort. Two batteries, "B"—my own—and "C," of field artillery, officered by a major, two captains, two lieutenants, a sergeant-major, and six sergeants, and consisting of one hundred and twenty toughs, scalawags, and gutter-scrapings, stewed and grilled at our twelve guns by day, and in our off-time "groused," fought, and drank in the township.

We sergeants—for I was one, the youngest and greenest—had our work cut out for us, but, backed by our major and working together as one man, we overcame the shirkers, grousers, and incipient mutineers by sheer force of will.

There was also a keen and, among the rank and file, a bitter rivalry between the two batteries, which led to personal conflicts and reprisals not always conducted with honor on either side.

You remember the Indian uprising of '94? It was the usual thing. First, the dispute with the agent at the reservation over supplies; then the demand for redress, the aggravating delay at Washington, the protest of the few half-drunken "braves," the quarrel, first shot, and subsequent murder of settlers on the border. What have n't those agents to answer for?

We read of it casually in our Topeka papers, and speculated as to which of our cavalry friends would be sent to "clean 'em up." It came, therefore, as a shock and a surprise when, about a week after hostilities had commenced, a "rush" telegram ordered Battery B to the front. I will not dilate on the jealousy and hard-feeling displayed by the unfortunate "C" battery, doomed to remain inactive at the fort; but we of Battery B were glad when we were hurried into a troop-train and whirled through a long, black, rainy night to Wamo, the railroad depot

nearest to the front. At Wamo, the rain being over, we collected our belongings, limbered up, and in company with a troop of cavalry, as escort, were soon under way.

As we jogged along we learned from our new friends that the Indians, to the number of three hundred and fifty, were entrenched on a rocky plateau some twenty-five miles away, from which the cavalry had failed to dislodge them. Taunts only had followed demands to surrender, and the ears of a "friendly" Indian who had been sent as envoy had been thrown into the cavalry camp as a hint that no further parleys would be listened to. At this point we were sent for. Clearly it was "up to us," and very proud we were that our comrades of the cavalry had to take a back seat.

We arrived at camp in the afternoon about four, very hot and tired, and, as the scouts reported everything quiet in the enemy's camp, active hostilities were postponed until next day. Our officers, with those of the cavalry, rode out to inspect the ground and fix the position from which the battery would shell our troublesome neighbors, it was hoped, into due submission to United States law.

Let me say in excuse for what followed that I am of an unusually over-anxious nature, and if in this case it saved us from abject humiliation, if not actual disaster, let that be my excuse.

About nine, after we had had our evening meal, the desire to see that all was right prompted me to leave the sergeants' fire and prowl about the guns, parked round the ammunition tent and at safe distance from sparks. The sentries—four of whom guarded the square of guns—let me through after close scrutiny, though the harvest moon made seeing as easy as in daylight, and I pulled back the flap of canvas and let the light pour in upon the neat, plain boxes containing such fearful possibilities of death and disaster.

The shells, in clamped and sealed cases, formed the ground layer on which rested the tin, air-tight powder-boxes with their sausage-like cartridges inside, and, on top of all, the small boxes containing the firing-tubes reflected the moonlight from their tin sides. Something moved me to handle one of them. It seemed light. I shook it lightly, but there was no resulting rattle. I tried another: the same. A third. "They must be packed differently," I thought. But no, I had handled one identically the same a short while before, at firing practice, and it had rattled!

I stood thinking deeply. "A mare's nest!" I exclaimed, laughing to myself. "I am an imaginative ass!"

I left the tent, dropped the flap, and passed the sentries as I walked back to our fire.

The Sergeant-Major, old and grizzled in harness, stood up as I walked into the circle.

"Oh, Jerry," he said, "I want a word with you;" and he came over, linked arms, and pulled me to one side.

This was providential, as it was in him I wished to confide my suspicions. I let him talk over the arrangements for to-morrow, with a detached mind. He saw this.

"What's worrying ye, Jerry?" he asked.

"Joe," I answered, Scotch fashion, "where were the firing-tubes packed, and when were they examined last?"

His face was a study.

"Why, at the fort, Jerry, the night we started, last night as ever was. My own eyes saw them. Why, for the land's sake?"

"Come to the ammunition-tent," I answered, and led the way.

"Let me get my electric lamp first," said the Sergeant-Major, and I waited while he got it.

Again, after passing the sentries and guns, I lifted the flap of the ammunition-tent, and we stood inside. The Sergeant-Major took the top box of firing-tubes, shook it, and with a quick gesture tore open the lid.

"Faked!" he exclaimed, with a face of iron, and turned out a mass of earth and paper with which the box had been filled.

"The others, Jerry!"

Together we examined the remaining five. They were equally treated. We had n't a firing-tube in the camp. *The guns were useless!*

For a full minute we stared at each other. Twice the Sergeant-Major strove to speak, his dry lips working. Then he said, "This means my finish!" He pulled himself up and his voice grew firmer.

"Sergeant Brandt, I leave you in charge of this tent. See that no one enters or leaves it until I return"—he motioned to the revolver at my hip—"not even the Colonel, himself!" and he strode away.

Mechanically I drew my weapon and examined the charges while his footfalls receded. My mind refused to work. Our guns were useless.

Five minutes must have passed in dull waiting before the sentry's challenge shook me together. A murmured response followed, and a few seconds afterwards our major and the Sergeant-Major burst into the little tent.

"What is this, Sergeant Brandt?" the Major, who carried the lamp, asked in a fierce whisper. "What is wrong with the firing-tubes?"

I gulped twice before I could answer.

"We have none, sir!" I got out.

Though the Sergeant-Major had told him everything, the truth only now seemed to strike him, for he sank heavily on a box of shells.

"Then, we are ruined, disgraced!" he said in a low voice, and dropped his head on his hand.

For barely a few seconds were we to see our trusted leader so overcome. There was a lightning change. He became himself.

"Have you examined the shells, fuses, and powder? No? Then do so at once! Come, lads!"

For ten minutes we were furiously busy, and at the end of that time had opened and examined every case and tin in the tent. They were in perfect order.

The Major stood up and wiped his hot brow. His tunic was open and his great chest heaving. Then he turned to us and glanced at the watch on his wrist.

"Five minutes to ten," he said, half to himself. "The reserve train was due at Wamo to-night. The convoy won't be here until to-morrow night at the earliest. Too late! Twenty-five miles—fifty miles—call it ten hours—that's eight o'clock to-morrow morning—call it nine. Too much—no horse could stand it. Perhaps—" He stood thinking for a space, then looked sharply at us.

It was a critical inspection. We guessed it, and instinctively drew up to "attention."

The Major's eagle eye ran over the Sergeant-Major's broad, generous figure. His fifty years sat lightly on him, yet the spring and suppleness of youth were gone. Then my turn came. There was a lightning decision.

"Sergeant-Major, turn out all the No. 1's and get each one to examine and overhaul his gun and equipment at once. Let them report anything missing or damaged to you, and you report to me at my tent in fifteen minutes. And remember, both of you, not a word of this to any one."

The Sergeant-Major saluted and withdrew.

"Sergeant Brandt"—the Major's voice had its usual hard ring—"I want you to start in fifteen minutes for Wamo. You will ride my charger, Brutus, as he has only been led to-day. You will be unescorted, and must take every precaution to avoid capture. You will give my order to the quartermaster in charge at Wamo, and will return at once with as many firing-tubes as you can carry. The battery will parade for action to-morrow morning at 9 A.M., and you must be here by then. Is this clear?"

I saluted. "Quite, Major," I answered.

His eyes softened, and he held out his hand.

"For the honor of Battery B!" he said.

"For the honor of Battery B!" I repeated.

Brutus and I were soon good friends. He was a great, ungainly brute, with no points about him, but his flat, shoeless hoofs held the rocky ground with a firm grip, and his huge lungs swelled easily between my knees as he covered mile after mile of the dark road.

We got off the trail, but although we had followed it only once

before, Brutus, when left to himself, was soon back on the right track. Once we were hailed in the darkness, but whether by friend or foe we did not wait to see, nor did we reply when a rifle cracked behind us.

The Wamo outpost hailed and nearly shot us about three A.M., as I discovered when dismounting at the guard tent. Brutus was sweating gently, but held his head high, and seemed in no wise distressed after his twenty-five-mile canter. I stroked his velvet nose and soon had him rubbed down, blanketed, and enjoying a few mouthfuls of fodder after a half-bucket of water.

A train was shunting as I knocked at the quartermaster's door which opened onto the freight yard, and ten impatient minutes elapsed before a lamp flared in the office and a sleepy man in hastily donned uniform tunic was examining my major's order.

"Have you blazed away all your ammunition already, Sergeant?" said the officer humorously. "You must be precious bad shots."

I smiled. "I have n't much time, sir," I said, "as I want to start back at four."

He took some keys from a drawer, and buttoned his tunic as he rose.

"Come, then," he said, taking an electric lamp from the desk. "I won't keep you."

He led the way down a passage in the warehouse and opened two locks in an iron-bound door.

"There are your stores," he said, pointing to a corner, and I gladly piled my arms with six of the well-known firing-tube boxes—this time with unbroken seals and distinctive rattle—and hastened back to the office.

After thanking the sleepy quartermaster, who retired to his bed, I busied myself strapping the boxes onto my saddle, and, after much trouble, succeeded in inducing a sleepy Oriental to make me a bowl of coffee. Warmed and soothed by its influence, I stretched myself on the bench of the waiting-room, and for half an hour lay with muscles relaxed.

Shortly after four I parted with the patrol, who, unmounted, could accompany me only a short distance on my journey, and got Brutus into his long, easy lope. It was getting faintly light now, and in the east the glow preceding sunrise was just visible.

I could easily make out the way, as the gun-wheel marks of the day before were cut into the sandy soil, and, taking advantage of Brutus's surefootedness, I was even able to cut off corners. But it was also easier for enemies to see me.

We had covered nearly twenty miles by seven, but the sun was fully over the horizon, and every rock and tree stood out in bold relief. I had made out the "Indian Hill," as we had called it for want of a better name, and was expecting to see the cavalry patrol I hoped would be

sent out to meet me, when a row of dots appeared against the bright sky on my right.

They were Indians without a doubt, and probably the same that had fired on me on my outward journey. I called on valiant Brutus, and the great beast responded nobly. Loaded as he was, he flew along, the sand and stones rattling behind us. The Indians were now in sight—six of them, mounted on fleet little ponies and riding like the wind on a diagonal course to cut us off.

Another mile was passed. They were drawing nearer. Weight was telling, and the great lungs sobbed between my knees. Half a mile more, and I could make them out clearly—the leader on a cream mustang of great speed. His feathers blew out grandly. The pace was killing—Brutus was nearly “all in.”

It was then that I remembered the Major’s parting injunction as he stood at Brutus’s head with his hand on his neck.

“He’s a true beast, Brandt,” he had said, “and will go until he drops. Don’t touch him with the spur, only speak to him, and, whatever you do, don’t let him go loose, or he’ll leave you like a streak and make for the other horses.”

“Leave you like a streak. Make for the other horses.” We were being overhauled. There was a chance.

Hardly giving myself time to reason, to calculate the consequences, I pulled Brutus gently to a standstill, dismounted, and with a chirrup and a smack on the quarter started him on the trail to the camp. For a few seconds he trotted, stirrups swinging, head in air, ears questioning; then his heels went out in a joyous kick, and “like a streak” he galloped down the trail.

A mad impulse to run after him was only checked with a great effort, and, biting my lips to stiffen them, I turned towards my pursuers.

My manœuvre seemed to have startled them, for at half a mile they pulled up in a semicircle and stared at my lonely figure, evidently fearing a trap. Then, with great deliberation, the leader dismounted, rested his rifle on his pony’s back, and fired three shots in my direction.

I saw and felt nothing of them, as his weapon was probably sighted at two hundred yards, and backsights are usually an unknown quantity to the Indian mind. This was a signal for a general fusillade.

“If only they’ll keep it up,” I thought, “it will bring the troopers in half an hour.”

For a while they kept at it, then, on a signal, mounted and galloped in a circle—of which I was the centre—until they had reached the opposite side. Here another bombardment took place, which I received in silence from behind a boulder.

“They will charge soon,” I thought, and rolled my revolver cylinder between my fingers.

At last they came, full charge, pennons flying, lying low behind their ponies' necks.

"Now for it!" I said, and clenched my teeth.

I saw the ponies' heads, their fierce, white-rimmed eyes, their tossing manes and sharp hoofs, then something—I think a piece of my friendly stone—hit me on the chin, a cloud of sand partly blinded me, and I rose to my knees, swearing hoarsely and firing wildly. A yelling, shooting cloud enveloped me, and I remember nothing more until a vast weight seemed to be pressing the life out of me.

Ages afterwards a distant booming struck upon my dulled senses. The weight was lessening upon my chest, and my eyes opened as a friendly face, very hot, red, and dusty, peered down at me.

"Wake up, son!" said a voice from the face. "It'll take more'n a dead cayuse to finish you off, even though he chose your chest ter lay down on, I'll swear!"

Kindly hands assisted me to rise, and I was soon weakly thanking two sunburned troopers who were feeling me for injuries.

Beyond the wound on the chin, which bled freely and was very painful, and many bruises, I was all right again, and able to recognize in the "cayuse" aforementioned the cream pony of the leader of my late enemies. Of them, with this exception, not a sight remained, but my trooper friends informed me that "the boys" were "rounding them up," and that "Bill" and they were to take me in to camp, if I "was worth takin'."

"Bill" and the horses were found further on, and as we mounted I learned that the battery was falling in as the troop, sent out to inquire the reason of the firing, was leaving camp. Soon to our ears came again the heavy boom of the field guns in action—I had heard the ranging guns when recovering consciousness—this time at regular intervals, so I knew Brutus had got into camp and all was well.

I was too done up to do more than report myself to the officer of the day and drag himself to my tent, where I lay, dead to the world, until noon. With one night in the troop-train, a heavy day afterwards, and a night in the saddle to my credit, I felt I had had enough.

The Sergeant-Major woke me, and his eyes gleamed with a glad light.

"We've shelled them out, Jerry Boy," he said joyously. "Forty-five rounds we fired, thanks to you, and the redskins are flying in all directions, with the troopers at their heels. We took position right on the tick o' nine, and the No. 2's had their pouches full of tubes, as if nothing had happened. I'd like to catch the dirty scoundrel that doctored those boxes. I'd—but what am I sayin'? The Major's mad to see ye and ask how ye came to let Brutus go and how ye got caught an'

all. But I wish I could tell the boys. There's no one knows but the Major and us two, and what d' ye think every one thinks ye went after?"

"What?" I asked.

"*The Major's cigars!*"

It was not until we got back to Fort Longworth that I had a chance to talk it out with the Major, and the few words he said made me very proud and happy.

"When you rise in the Service, Brandt," he said to me before I left him—"and if you stick to it, you will—remember that the honor of your regiment, battery, troop, or company comes first above all. Cultivate that belief in your men, and you will lead them anywhere. Had we failed when our country needed us, even for a day, it would have been forever against us. I have found out who caused the mischief. There is no need to mention names, but he has left the regiment and the Service forever. And now there is one more thing: Brutus is yours, and as long as I live I won't forget how you two saved the honor of Battery B."

PAINTED ON A FAN

BY ALICE HARTICH

DEAR little lady, dressed in colors bright;
Always pleasant, always smiling, such a happy sight!
Funny little lady, painted on a fan,
Little, twisted, bowing lady of Japan!

My, how smooth your hair is rolled, very smooth and neat;
Peeping out beneath that skirt, such tiny little feet;
Great wide sleeves, and parasol, to shield you if they can—
Pretty, modest, quiet little lady of Japan!

Cherry-Blossoms, pink and sweet, dancing in the air;
Just one tiny little spray captured in your hair.
Purple pale wistaria, climbing up and down
Through the graceful flowing folds of my lady's gown.

Would n't an inviting cup of amber, steaming tea
Bring you tripping here to sup a little while with me?
Tranquil, queer, illusive little lady of Japan,
How I wish that you were not just painted on a fan!

THE TUNING OF HULDAH

By Amy Crosby

HULDAH turned uneasily in bed. Again facing the window, she drew the crisp muslin curtain back a little and looked.

"Umph!" she sniffed. "I s'pose he's tellin' the whole town; or else makin' the medicine."

For full quarter of an hour she waited. Then, more fretful, she reached her hand toward a small white table, and drew a bowl of ice toward her. With a kind of savage pleasure she crunched the ice loudly, and fixed her narrow gray eyes on the gate.

"I'd like to—" Suddenly her eyes closed, and Huldah pretended to sleep as Henry entered.

He tiptoed across the room to the foot of her bed, where he stood, hat in hand, mopping his brow.

"Huldah," he whispered, resting his big kind eyes upon her, "shan't I open this outside door a little? There's a breeze stirrin'."

"Do you want the flies to eat me up?" she snapped. "What'd the Doctor say?"

Henry draped himself on a chair.

"Don't screw that tidy all up into a little woodge," glowered Huldah. "Set down, if you're goin' to. Where's the medicine?"

"He did n't send any, Huldy. He's comin' up," ventured Henry.

Huldah sniffed. "Two dollars a visit! 'Course he's comin' up. Been here fifteen times now—fer nothin'! I want medicine!" she declared, drawing her lips tight at the corners.

"He says you don't," explained Henry slowly. "He says you want—want tunin'."

"Tunin'? What does he think I am?"

"He says you're a work o' God, Huldah. I guess he'd like you to go some place, and get—"

"He come from Noo York," broke in Huldah. "All they think about down there is *goin'* some place. Did you tell him 'bout this heat in my head?"

"He says it's your nerves," informed Henry quietly.

"That means it's nothin'! Dr. Boynton never harped on nerves, nor this here roof-sleepin'. Long as he lived here, I had somethin' to take. I ain't goin' to swaller *air*, nor suck eggs; and I ain't goin' to have my flesh tore off by no Swede. When he goes to doctorin' me with

medicine, I 'll pay his bill; but I ain't pokin' money into nō rat-holes. Bring me some o' that tansy tea. Don't be a week about it, Henry! I took tansy fer tonic when I was sixteen, an' I 'm goin' to take it now, whatever he says. Don't leave your hat on that table. Hang it on the kitchen peg."

Just then Dr. Bliss drove his little white car in at the side gate. Throwing his gray linen coat over a porch chair, he darted into the kitchen, held his dusty hands under the shiny spigot, dried them on the fresh roller-towel, and followed Henry into the bedroom.

"Mrs. Dodge," he began jovially, flinging wide the shutters and the outside door, "a little light will show you how earnest I am when I ask you a favor. First, how motherly do you feel?"

"What are you talkin' about?" she asked doggedly.

"About mothers," he answered, smiling.

"Well, I ain't never been a mother to nothin' but chickens an' orphan cats. What did you mean when you told Henry that I needed tunin'? Did you mean tonin' or tannin'?"

"Neither, Mrs. Dodge. I meant tuning. It's exactly what I want to talk about. Women are like pianos—not always up to pitch, and you have to look into the case to correct the works. Trouble begins with the strings, usually. The tone's wrong. Bring up the loose ones, and let down the tight ones—ever so little—and there's harmony again. Nature's plan was harmony."

Huldah looked at him without moving, and the Doctor, resting his steady blue eyes on her skimpy face, leaned forward a little and continued:

"Now, what makes strings wrong? Sometimes they've been used too much, sometimes too little. Love notes, instead of being soft and mellow, sharpen or flat. And they remain so until some heart-work reaches them, restores and tunes them. The result is harmony. May I tell you a story?" he asked suddenly, drawing his chair a shade nearer.

Huldah nodded half-heartedly, and the Doctor began:

"Two years ago"—jerking his thumb toward the stable—"I came around that corner one morning and saw a frail little woman bending over the brook. She looked worried, so I stopped my car and walked toward her. The water was above her shoe-tops, but she waded out to a helpless little chicken, standing on a rock, peeping its heart out. It had followed a brood of ducks, and was very young. The woman told me it had hatched out by mistake under a duck-mother—that it needed a natural one. Then she put its little wet feet against her warm breast. 'I 'll bring it up by hand,' she said, and went away briskly into the house."

"It's a hen now," attested Huldah proudly. "The best layer I 've got."

"Paid, did n't it?" said the Doctor seriously. "Hand work always pays, Mrs. Dodge. That's what I want to talk to you about. I know a little girl in New York, and she's in deep water, too. She's with the wrong brood! I'm worried about her, Mrs. Dodge, and I'd like to get her up here in the country, away from those who are trying to swim. I think if she had a chance she'd—well, she'd like simple things. I want you to take her here to board. Will you do it?"

"Why, I ain't able to—"

"She'll help. She has n't money enough to pay much, but she's a kind of a—well, a niece, a foster-niece, of mine; so we'll jump accounts, you and I. She's nice to be with, too. You'll like her, and you can help her."

The Doctor stood. He looked very big, very masterful, as, stepping to the bed, he laid his strong fingers over Huldah's.

"That's all the medicine I shall prescribe, Mrs. Dodge," he said quietly. "Let me know in the morning, early, so I can run down in the car and bring her out."

A deep silence followed the closing of the door, broken only by the rasping notes of an early locust. Henry was no talker, so Huldah lay some time watching the car as it sped away down the narrow road, where tall elms formed an arch and a border. Still looking into space, she said slowly, more to herself than to Henry:

"It'll save pullin' that money out o' the bank—and I ain't obliged to keep a boarder after the bill's paid. . . . Henry!" she called abruptly. "Put a piece of ice into that tansy, and bring it along. Tell Sophie I'll need her the rest of the week. Don't set so logy, Henry. Go tell her 'fore she gets away."

"Why, Huldy," Henry exclaimed, "I did n't s'pose you'd like his prescription!"

"You ain't expected to *like* medicine, are you?" she snapped. "Ain't expected to take it forever, either. This cost o' livin' 's got to be met, ain't it? You an' me has both got to be laid out yet, an' buried. Who's goin' to save fer it?"

"Don't worry so about the cost o' things, Huldy," urged Henry. "We ain't begun to spend our interest money. Why, you kin—"

"I kin do my own figurin', Henry Dodge, an' I'm figurin' on gittin' well if you bring that tansy in here so's I kin drink it. You kin go across there now to the grocery an' telephone Bliss that I'll take his—his lady friend to-morrow evenin'."

Sleep came late to Huldah. Her tepid regard for affairs—not her own—bickered with a feminine suspicion of romance. "Foster-niece" was a vague term; "deep water," another; but the portion of board to be settled in cash was a matter of vital importance. Five dollars a week? But five dollars could be taken from thirty dollars just six

times, and Huldah had no intention of spending six weeks with a total stranger. Sophie was a good cook; she would keep her. With no work to do, and the prices of food still soaring, this girl should be willing to pay—

Huldah went to sleep thinking about it.

The great red sun had dropped out of the west next day when Dr. Bliss reappeared at the side of the bed, leading a brown-eyed, linen-coated girl by the hand. She looked scarcely twenty. The doctor raised the shade quietly, and said in a cheerful voice:

"Mrs. Dodge, this is Nina Boyd. She's got a nurse's cap and apron in this little straw grip, and she wants to be useful."

Huldah turned pale. For a moment her chin dropped. She felt angry, happy, and awed, all at once. "Nurse!" she exclaimed frigidly. "I thought she was to be a boarder."

The merriest kind of laugh followed. "I am," declared Nina. "But I know all about boarding, Mrs. Dodge. The Doctor's going to teach me to nurse."

Whereupon, with quiet speed, unaffected by Huldah's surprise, she pulled two dazzling hat-pins from a small brown toque, slipped off her coat, and knelt beside her grip. In the fraction of a second, she had unwrapped a flat package, and, still pinning a fresh white cap to her brown curls, turned a pink face towards Huldah.

"You see," she explained, smiling feebly, "it's two years since I nursed Mother; but I remember perfectly all the things she loved. You'll teach me about yours, won't you?"

Huldah frowned.

"Dr. Bliss," she stammered, "we've—we've got a room ready for a boarder. I was n't lookin' fer no nurse."

"So far as pay is concerned, Miss Boyd is a boarder," explained the Doctor. "She'll pay whatever you think is fair, Mrs. Dodge. Meantime, she's going to help me. The town needs a district nurse, and Miss Boyd wants to try. The benefit is mutual. We'll each have a share. I, however, will take all the risk of her inexperience, so when you're tired of the plan, tell me."

The Doctor left the room as quietly as he had come, and Huldah settled back among her pillows, exhausted. She lay there without comment, her eyes closed, until, after fruitless attempts at conversation, Miss Boyd went upstairs.

"Henry," Huldah asked, as he locked the street door, "is this nurse idea your'n?"

"All I know about it, Huldy, is what I just heard. Seems like a first-class notion for the town, though. There's considerable sickness. She's a pretty little thing, but young for the business. Folks'll kick," prophesied Henry.

"Kick!" exclaimed Huldah. "Then the Doctor'll hobble 'em! But I ain't so sure I like his way o' startin' and finishin' a thing in the same breath. I've run my house now for forty years, an' I'm goin' to continue! When I agreed to take a boarder, I did n't bargain on startin' a dispensary. I'm madder'n a March hare; but I would n't turn nobody outdoors just at nightfall. You go tell Sophie the second-best chiny in the mornin' is good enough. An' stand still, Henry! You act like a hoppergrass!"

The night and most of the day passed before Huldah would consent to interview Miss Boyd. Then it was with a feeling of uncertainty.

Nina opened the door gently, walked as far as the fireplace, and stopped. When six Jacqueminot roses had taken the place of a bunch of dried pampas-grass on the high shelf, Huldah's viewpoint wavered, and because at that moment Nina's fingers stealthily brushed a tear from her own round cheek, Huldah's viewpoint tottered.

"What's the matter?" she asked quickly, but gently.

"I don't know," swallowed the girl. "Things are so fresh and bright and clean out here. It's all so quiet and so sweet. We used to have roses like that growing by our kitchen door," she added, then stopped.

"And now?" questioned Huldah, narrowing her eyes a little.

"Every time I see any, my throat hurts. The other night—" Nina stopped again, and moved a cameo ring back and forth upon her slender finger.

"What about the other night?" questioned Huldah.

"It was the smell, I think," she explained. "You see, I used to put them on the breakfast-table, and if I picked them early, before the dew was off, they'd smell twice as sweet." Nina waited a long moment. "You see," she continued, "the other night at the theatre some one handed me a bunch just as I left the dressing-room. I broke. That's the way I got acquainted with the Doctor."

"Got acquainted with the Doctor!" exclaimed Huldah. "Ain't he an uncle of yours?" she asked quickly.

"No. He says I'm to call him Uncle Dudley, but I never saw him until four nights ago."

"Four nights ago!" cried Huldah sharply. "What was you doin' at the theatre?"

"Singing. They offered me more on the stage than I got at the café. The manager down at the café said I must wear better clothes—a train and low neck; but I did n't have any. Why, Mrs. Dodge, when I had paid my board, my room rent, piano rent, and car-fares, I did n't have enough left to buy a newspaper. Morse, the manager, spoke to me three times. Then he told me I must get the clothes somehow, or leave. What could I do?

"The next day I got a place in a—well, a kind of music hall, where the manager promised to pay me eighteen a week and furnish the clothes. I did n't like the idea much. But when you've got to do a thing, you've got to, that's all."

Huldah sprang up in bed.

"Did Dr. Bliss bring you up here from one of them music halls?" she demanded sharply.

"The first night I was there," Nina explained, "he sat in the front row. I did n't feel up to it when I started to sing, but I knew I must n't flunk the very first night. I made a few flat notes, caught myself, found the piano again, and went on. Then, all of a sudden, everything began to swim. That was the last I knew."

"It seems, when they called a doctor, he came. He took me to a hospital. Then he said I must n't sing there any more. You see, I was all out of money—out of everything. Yesterday he brought me out here, because by nursing in the district, helping him, he says I can pick up strength and money enough to pay my board. He said you'd let me begin on you. But—"

"Bring in some o' that soup, Miss Boyd. I ain't et nothin' since yesterday," confided Huldah. "Then I'm goin' to get up. Pull this chair onto the stoop, an' I'll set out a spell."

Nina obeyed promptly.

"Did you say," Huldah asked a couple of hours later, as Nina thoughtfully supplied a hassock, "that he planned to take you to some case in the village?"

"Yes. Five dollars a week for a few hours each day. The mother has twins."

"Twins! I did n't know as there was any of them around," exclaimed Huldah.

"They're new; and a trained nurse steadily is too expensive. I love babies; don't you?"

"No, not much. You'll be down there probly the very times I want you," opined Huldah.

"I'm to serve you first. He says the baby case is very interesting. He says—"

"Umph! He says a lot. I s'pose my case ain't interestin'."

"Oh, yes; he says your heart is bigger than your soul," quoted Nina.

"What'd he mean by that?"

"I don't know, but he said I'd find out if I lived here."

"Miss Boyd—" began Huldah confidentially.

"Do you mind calling me Nina? It makes it seem more like home," explained the girl warmly.

"That man Bliss," continued Huldah, "is the queerest doctor that ever set foot into a sick-room. He's got a way o' turnin' things wrong

side out so's they look fresher'n new. New-fangled idee this—not givin' medicine. Did they give your mother medicine?"

"Yes, lots of it. She died."

"I ain't felt like dyin'," admitted Huldah simply. "I feel considerable like livin'. But when I ask fer things I want 'em. That's no disease," she added thoughtfully.

Two weeks passed, and with them many signs of Huldah's spleen. Her morbid anxiety about cobwebs and dirt gave place to a modified interest in Nina's new work, but the hours Huldah shared with the unknown twins seemed seriously to upset her. Besides, half Henry's time was now spent carrying and fetching for Nina. Huldah had lived a unit too long to become a proper fraction.

Sitting out one day under a low apple-tree, she hulled one great strawberry after another, feeling a dull sense of loss. Then there was a touch of rebellion. Why should Dr. Bliss choose her illness to promote his own schemes? What right had Nina to appropriate Henry? She was nothing to them, yet Henry seemed to feel that only the best carriage was good enough for Nina to ride in. Huldah's resentment grew. It had become almost a prejudice when a clicking gate disconcerted her. Raising her eyes suddenly, she met those of a loudly dressed stranger, who approached with something like a swagger and raised a silk hat.

"Mrs. Dodge," he said, "I'm looking for a young girl, and the loose end of a contract."

Five more berries were separated from their hulls and tossed into the glass dish before Huldah replied.

"What kind of a contract?" she asked.

"Business contract; money for music; promise for promise. I'm a man of a few words," he added, shifting his big cigar to the opposite corner of his mouth. "She made a hit at my 'Little Moonbeam.' I've got the dough, an' I'm no tight-wad where good looks is concerned." With a significant wink, he reached his hand deep into his trousers pocket. "What does she want?" he asked pompously.

"To be let alone," was Huldah's terse reply. "The end o' that contract ain't loose. I've got it."

"Then, you're why she skids? What's your price?"

"More'n your whole music hall's worth!"

The stranger raised his brows, pursed his lips, and wagged his head slowly. "Where's the girl?" he asked, taking his cigar out of his mouth and contemplating its lighted end.

"With her step-father, and he's more particular'n I be. You'll find a path right back o' that maple. It's a shorter cut to the station than you come, an' you ain't so apt to meet the bulldog."

The stranger faltered, but there was no sign of mirth in Huldah's eyes.

"I understood," he said slowly, "that Nina needed money—that she did n't have any father."

"You understood right," Huldah explained. "Her—her step-father an' me ain't always understood her needs; but she's back here now, an' she ain't lookin' fer work. So you need n't miss no trains palaverin'."

With a dish full of berries in one hand, and a basin of hulls in the other, Huldah rose, crossed the porch, and opened the screen door with her foot, evidently considering the incident closed.

"What was he, Miss Dodge?" asked Sophie, from the far end of the kitchen. "Another one of them land prospectors?"

"No. He's sellin' gold bricks made in his own brass foundry. He says Noo York's took 'em up, an' you can't tell 'em from the genuine. I bought one with a rubber end, Sophie. When you get that ham fried you kin examine it. The less you talk about it, the more it'll bring. That's part of your job."

Several days later Huldah sent for Dr. Bliss, met him at the side gate, and motioned him to a red seat under the maple.

"Set down," she said. "I only want to say that I ain't pleased with payin' Nina to nurse the whole earth."

"But, my dear woman," explained the Doctor, "Nina is to pay you. We have n't discussed terms, but at the end of the month——"

"At the end of the month I want this skitterin' stopped," declared Huldah. "The place for that girl is here. Get some husky nurse for them twins."

"That is n't altogether the point, Mrs. Dodge. In exchange for Nina's work, they offer their piano a couple of hours each day."

"I've been thinkin' about a piano fer Henry's birthday. An' I'd like to git you to pick it out," she added thoughtfully.

The Doctor hesitated. "A piano in the house alters the atmosphere," he reasoned slowly. "Nina Boyd might change character—become noisy, negligent, and selfish. The Smiths all practise. They're used to it. Even the twins are musical," he added, smiling.

"You can't run the whole thing," snapped Huldah, with old-time vim.

The Doctor ran his calm fingers back and forth over his chin. "Your choosing it is a different matter," he said deliberately. "I could run you over to Hicksburg in a couple of hours—that is, if you really want to get a piano. To-day is the last time I have free for over a fortnight. The birthday's to-morrow, is n't it?"

Never in Huldah's life had she entered an automobile. She had never been to Hicksburg. She had spent her whole life keeping house—*out loud*.

She waited a moment, then, after a stealthy glance at Henry's straw hat bobbing up and down in the garden, she made a rapid move toward the waiting car.

They had sped along some time, through a fragrant wood, up a steep and sandy pitch where a ragged bridge suddenly lowered the speed.

"Go slow a spell, can't you?" urged Huldah.

The car practically stopped.

"The truth of the matter is," confided Huldah, "I can't spare Nina! Her singin' fer Henry last night made me—well, it made my spine kinda shiver." Huldah became thoughtful. "I don't know as I've done right by Henry. He is gittin' old," she said slowly.

There was no reply.

"And so far as money's concerned," she continued, "I ain't felt so flush for sixteen years. I ruther pay some husky woman to wash up them twins regular than have Nina away so much."

"That's one side of it," ventured the Doctor, "but the main thing is this: Nina Boyd's talent deserves cultivation, and she's got to earn every penny she spends."

"No, she ain't," defended Huldah. "Me and Henry ain't so poor as we are lonesome. And Nina's put somethin' into me that I ain't ready to lose. When we had the farm, I could watch things grow, and I—well, I ain't felt so well since we sold it."

"She'd grow," declared the Doctor warmly, "if she had the cultivation and some one like you, Mrs. Dodge, to shelter her a little."

At this point Huldah's hand gripped the seat, for, after a quick dash, they took Piano Factory Hill on high gear, and swung around the turn to a broad factory door rolling slowly back to receive them.

Slightly awed by the hum of work, the bustling men, and the somewhat unctuous salesman, Huldah sidled closer to the Doctor.

"We've got the room," she whispered, after a quick inspection, "to house one o' them baby-grands. And I like 'em. There's another thing," she added dogmatically: "I want to see it all loaded up and started on that there auto-truck before we pull out ourselves."

It was late at night, and, though the lights were dim, Huldah's pale cheeks looked unnaturally pink as she sat there tapping one foot in time to the music. Beside her on the black hair-cloth sofa sat Henry, his pudgy red hand moving slyly toward hers.

The room grew still a moment. Then the quick, sprightly strain halted. Dr. Bliss struck a few deeper, major chords, and instinctively Nina's clear, sympathetic voice found and cradled the notes of Brahms's German lullaby. Their voices joined, and gradually softened, merging into one, like the deep notes of a cello. On and on they sang with no trace of discord—in sympathy and in love with life.

Huldah's thin hand clasped Henry's.

"Henry," she said softly, "seem's if I know now what he meant by *tunin'*."

UNWRITTEN LAW

By Elizabeth Winter

“LADIES”—Mrs. Julius Thornton, President of the Dalton Woman’s Literary Club, had rapped on the table, and there was immediate, reverent silence—“ladies, before we take up our regular programme, I wish to call attention to this magazine article. The writer is new to me, but she so evidently appreciates both the difficulties and the possibilities that lie before the rural woman who is reaching out for a broader and higher culture, that I feel we can do no better than to get her point of view.”

She paused for breath, and the semicircle of faces beamed with interest.

“It will please me greatly to have the magazine passed about among you, and at our next meeting we will have a discussion—an earnest, intelligent one, let us hope.”

The President looked solemnly from face to face, beginning on her left and ending with the last one on her right; and each head, in turn, had responded with a gracious inclination. That is, all except Mrs. Bertram Lloyd’s. Hers was tossed to one side, and her eyes were rolled up to the ceiling. But she said nothing, which was as near an assent as could be expected, and Mrs. Julius Thornton had a perfect right to feel that her seed had fallen into good ground.

“And now we must get to work,” she resumed, in brisk, business-like tones. “Whom will you have, ladies, to fill our dear Mrs. Gorman’s place? Remember we have only *one* vacancy.”

The ladies looked at one another with serious, questioning eyes. Whom *could* they choose? Truly this club work brought great responsibilities! At last Mrs. Willet, over near the door, cleared her throat and ventured timidly:

“I nominate Mrs. Jim Thornton.”

Silence.

“Is there a second to that nomination?”

The ladies searched their President’s face, there was a distinct rustle, then—silence.

Two pink spots had come into Mrs. Willet’s cheeks.

“Ladies, I deplore the awkwardness of the situation,” Mrs. Thornton said suavely. “Nothing like it has occurred in the history of our organ-

ization. Of course, *all* of us would like to bring our special friends into this exclusive circle. As for myself, it is not necessary to say that I am very, very fond of my sister-in-law, Nannie Thornton; but"—she raised her eyes bravely—"like a great many other really good women, she is bound by her limitations. Forced to live in the country until last year, tied down with her little children and household cares, how could she be expected to find time for self-culture, for the expansion of mind and soul!"

"But she reads a great deal, and—"

"As for that, so does the colored lady in my kitchen," flashed Mrs. Bertram Lloyd, rolling her eyes to the ceiling above Mrs. Willet's head. "I said to Bertram when I started down here—'Bertram,' I said, 'I intend to express myself quite frankly at the meeting.' Unwritten laws never did scare me." She brought her eyes down, flaunted them at the others, pursed her lips to one side, and shrugged.

Mrs. Thornton hastily interposed:

"My friends, that the Club would be a great help and pleasure to Mrs. Jim Thornton, we do not question for one moment; but—we—must—have—*students*—in the Woman's—Literary—Club. We need wide-awake women with a broad view of life, and a real interest in the vital—issues—of—our—times!"

"But she *does* know, and she is a good worker when—"

"So is my cook a good worker—when!"

The ladies laughed and felt relieved; then turned again toward their President. Would she be equal to this crisis?

She would.

"Time passes, my friends, and we must settle this question. Mrs. Willet's nomination has not been seconded. Are there any others?"

"I nominate Mrs. De Long, our new rector's wife," said Mrs. Lloyd. "I told Bertram just this afternoon that I thought she ought to belong. She has a great long string of D.D.'s in her family, and ought to know all about French history and Napoleon Bonaparte. Don't you think so?"

"Why, she is a perfect stranger! How could we possibly know—"

The President heard a whisper at her elbow—"What is the matter with Mrs. Willet?"—and again measured up to the responsibility of leadership.

"I feel, ladies, that Mrs. Lloyd is right. It is far wiser to risk a—a pleasing probability than to accept a—a—positive—a—"

"I second Mrs. Lloyd's nomination!" blurted Mrs. Abbott; and no wonder, for Mrs. Lloyd had brought sudden pressure to bear on her tenderest toe. Mrs. Willet had seen it.

The election was declared unanimous, nobody noticing Mrs. Willet's silence. But she arose, the spots in her cheeks flaming crimson.

"Madam President, may I be excused for five minutes?"

A shade of apprehension crossed Mrs. Julius Thornton's face.

"I'll be right back," Mrs. Willet added gently.

"Why, certainly, certainly. We will wait for your return, Mrs. Willet."

A sigh of mingled relief and wonder passed, like a wave, around the room when the door closed.

"Shall we wait, ladies? Very well—yes, I *do* think it is due Mrs. Willet. And, ladies, I will use the opportunity to say that we must be very considerate and—patient; for no one tries harder than Mrs. Willet to do her part of the work, and you know, too, that there is not a house in town quite so suitable for our Christmas reception as hers."

The President looked at her watch, fluttered the leaves of the magazine, looked at her watch again, and frowned slightly as Mrs. Willet, pale and out of breath, came inside the door, and remained standing.

She had been gone six minutes!

"I just ran down the street to the nearest telephone and called up Nannie Thornton," she said in a timid, deprecating voice. "I asked her—she said I might tell you—*she* wrote that in the magazine!"

Her eyes faltered upward as high as the President's hands that held the book, just as Mrs. Bertram Lloyd's rolled down from the ceiling, and rested, fascinated, on the same spot.

"She did n't want it known about her articles and her—books, but I begged her—I thought you'd like to know."

Her eyes dropped again to her own hands, clasped tightly around a shopping-bag, and her voice almost failed her:

"If you should wish to have Mrs. Thornton—Mrs. Jim Thornton—in the Club, she can have—my place. I cannot—I am not going to be—any longer. I'm too busy—"

At last the President found her voice.

"My *dear* Mrs. Willet, we cannot for a moment consider your resignation! We will *create* a place for Mrs. James McClure Thornton in the Dalton Woman's Literary Club! To think of dear sister Nannie doing all those wonderful things, the quiet minx! Of course we could not know—how could we? But now everything is all right, and she must come right in! Going? And you will not reconsider? So sorry, every one of us is—but, ladies, let's dispense with the programme, and go down in a body to welcome Mrs. Thornton into our Club! Mrs. Willet, we should be glad to have you join us."

The ladies were on their feet in an instant.

Mrs. Willet had waited, holding to the door-knob, and the red spots had come back into her cheeks.

"Oh, I had forgotten! I told Nannie you *might* elect her, and she said, if you did, to thank you, and say she was sorry, but she did n't have time."

POOR ART'S SAKE

By Carl H. Grabo

"WE'LL make it four thousand for the twelve," said the Art Editor. "You ought to get five; but as you are new to the business, I'll save the magazine the difference."

"Of course," assented the artist amiably. "I'll stick you later, when you're obliged to have my work."

"That's business," agreed the Art Editor. "Understand, these covers are business, too. None of your artistic foolishness. We want something that's conventional in a new way. Get that? Create a type—the Jenkins Girl. Every department-store must have pictures of the Jenkins Girl: pictures framed in burnt wood, embroidered on sofa cushions, and stamped on leather. That is Art."

"Nice prospect, Art," said Jenkins.

"They all kick up a bit at first," the Art Editor agreed soothingly; "but they don't mind after a little. It has its compensations, you know. If you are careful, you can marry rich, move in the best circles, join the most exclusive clubs, and, in short, be a Success. You will not cease to work hard, for you will always be afraid that your wife will reproach you because she supports you."

The editor enjoyed his own conversation, and he had, besides, little to do. Observing premonitory symptoms of departure, he offered Jenkins a cigar. The artist twirled it in his fingers abstractedly.

"I'm afraid I can't comply with your ideas of fashionable marriage," he said. "Besides, when I've put by enough money, I'm going to discontinue this prostitution of art and take up portrait-painting. I want to study in Paris for a couple of years."

"Oh, well," said the Art Editor compassionately, "if you're going to talk that way, why, go on and enjoy yourself. Renounce this material world and live only in the joy of creation—is that the idea? I said twenty-five hundred for the covers, did n't I?"

"Oh, I have n't reached the point where I can't see the difference between a quarter and a half-dollar. Just satisfy my curiosity upon one point, and the artistic conscience will have kicked its last. Why, in doing the altogether for a magazine cover—say, a spring piece, or the 'Spirit of the Woods,' or some such original fantasy—why, I say, should the unadorned figure be plump and solid, whereas, if clothed,

she must be made svelte, diaphanous, and slinky? I have studied anatomy, you know, and I have always in mind the figure beneath the clothes in which it is sheathed."

"Your talk is piffle," said the Art Editor. "But I'm sorry you have studied anatomy. It restrains invention. If you will look over our leading illustrators, you will note that none of them have any knowledge of anatomy. Your reference to clothes is, however, important. You must realize, of course, how vital it is that you be not only up-to-date, but a little ahead of the styles. It is well to walk the Avenue a bit, but the best way of all is to study the latest imported shows. You will find that our leading actresses have a great function in the dissemination of new styles."

"I heed your words of wisdom. Any particular one you recommend?"

"Lipski tells me that the costumes for his *prima donna* cost him fifteen thousand. Better strike him for a pass. Just mention me."

"And who is the *prima donna*?"

"The delicious French comedienne, Yvette Crevecœur, no less, fresh from Iowa *via Paris*."

"I'm from Iowa myself," said Jenkins. "I'll drop in and see her. Iowa may thus furnish an Easter design for New York."

Lipski, manager of "*The Prancing Princess*" show, pink, blasé, and with the stripes running up and down, granted Jenkins a pass with scarcely an evidence of life.

"Great little chorus," he piped wearily through rolls of fat.

The hussar girlies of "*The Prancing Princess*" gamboled frivolously, clad in cobweb hosiery and the minimum of supplementary garments; the comedian gesticulated his silent encore; and Yvette Crevecœur, the *Prancing Princess* herself, attired successively in a riding-habit, a bathing-suit, a street dress, an evening gown, and coronation robes, sang songs variously inconsequential.

Jenkins was bored to death and looked about for a means of escape over or under the five large ladies between him and the aisle. Thereupon the *Princess* danced down-stage and sang the chorus of her song directly at him.

"Great Cedar Rapids!" said he under his breath. "It was the auburn hair that fooled me."

He called an usher to carry in his card.

She was having her hair revamped, and the maid hovered over her with deft fingers. But she extended a hand and smiled at him from beneath the curling-iron.

"It's your own hair, too," he said, aggrieved, "and such a color! No wonder I did n't recognize you."

"Art demands its sacrifices," she answered lightly, but he thought that she was a bit hurt.

"Why did n't you tell me, Mollie, that you were in this?" he reproached her. "I supposed you were still in Paris."

"How's the art, Will?" she evaded. "You must be prosperous if you can afford front row seats for such a rotten show."

"Oh, I got in on a pass—Lipski."

"I was afraid you were making money," she said, relieved.

"And why should n't I do that?"

"It would spoil your work, of course," she answered.

"You think so?" he asked and looked at her quizzically. "And you in this show?"

"I was n't going to let you know of this until later," she replied. "Then I saw you were about to leave, and I could n't resist throwing myself at you. I get so lonesome sometimes and long so to see a friend. That's why I signalled you. It was no especial compliment, you see."

The maid dusted her with talcum powder. Jenkins, out of habit, let his eyes wander over the objects of the room—the trunks, the forms with the costly dresses hung upon them, the bare walls and floor, the gas-jet in which the maid heated the curling-iron, and finally back to the dressing-table with its accessories of silver and cut glass, each a sculptor's tool for the modelling of beauty.

"Why are you doing it, Mollie? For the money?" he asked.

She shot a quick, apprehensive glance at him. But he was abstractedly noting the details of a dress.

"Oh, it's the easiest way to the legitimate," she said carelessly. "Then, too, it gives me training of a sort. And, best of all, it gives me money which will be of use. I make lots of money," she added, and tentatively, "more than I know what to do with."

The suggestion was lost upon him.

"I thought Shakespeare and Ibsen were the only boys for you," he said.

"They'll keep," she answered gaily. "A little more rouge, Marie. Now you may go."

He shook his head, frowning.

"You and I were to put Cedar Rapids on the map, remember. You the great actress, I the great portrait-painter. Now look at us!"

She stole a troubled glance at him.

"You will be the painter, I'm confident of that, whether I'm the actress or just a Prancing Princess."

"You think so?" he demanded again, sharply.

"One of us must make good, of course," she replied. "It's for the glory of Cedar Rapids and for each other. I'll feel I have a share in your success. And that is why I want you to let me——"

"Suppose I should go in for the commercial art myself?" he interposed, unheeding her words.

"But you won't," she said, and laid her hand upon his. "I have faith in you, Will, more than in myself."

He covered her hand in his and then let it drop.

"I might do it, just the same," he said. "Don't be too sure."

"I'm not afraid," she answered, smiling, but she studied him narrowly nevertheless.

He was not looking at her.

"Do you remember what we gave up for this life of art?" he asked.

"Yes—no—I guess so," she answered uneasily, for she saw there was no stopping him. She nervously snapped the cover of a jewel-box. Slyly she abstracted a pink slip of paper with a serrated edge. She unfolded it, read it, folded it again, and held it concealed in the palm of her hand. She snapped the cover of the box again and set it upon the dressing-table. Then she awakened to him. He was soliloquizing:

"I might create a type—the Jenkins Girl: Jenkins Girl walking down Fifth Avenue; Jenkins Girl at the altar; Jenkins Girl pouring tea; Jenkins Girl with arms about the neck of Jenkins young man. These works of art would appear on magazine covers and sofa-pillows. The bed-room of every sweet slip of a sixteen-year-old girl would contain one."

"No, not that," she said confidently.

"And we gave up for this," he went on, undeterred, "the art of Iowa. I might be painting cornfields and pumpkins for exhibition at the State and county fairs. And perhaps the Representative from my district would insist upon the purchase by the State of one of my masterpieces to hang in the capitol building. You would give dramatic readings at the church socials, and all the good people would shake their heads uneasily, but never fail to come and applaud."

"I should give scenes from Shakespeare," she said, smiling, "but I fear they would never stand for Ibsen."

"And we would have a pretty place with a large garden and trees and big verandas. And we should have children to bring up, perhaps. I think of them sometimes when I'm blue."

"Don't, Will," she said, and laid her hand over her eyes.

"I'm talking this way to work on your feelings." He laughed uncertainly. "Mollie," he said, "I want you now more than then. I can make a living for us both at my work. And though it may not be portrait-painting, I'd rather do it with you than be Rembrandt without you. I mean it. It's not a matter of sudden impulse, but deliberate. Maybe the better work would come later. And if not, no matter."

"It's good of you," she said, and turned to him that he might see the tears in her eyes. "But we've given up too many years now to go

back. We must keep on. Don't you see we could never forgive ourselves for the wasted years? Besides," she added, noting that he was unconvinced, "I can't give up this life now; it has grown upon me; I must have the notoriety and the lights and the music and all the things Cedar Rapids could never give me. It's true," she said in answer to his pained look. "And most of all I've set my heart on your success. I could never forgive myself if I should keep you from becoming all you should and will become."

She came over to him and, kneeling beside him, put her arms about him.

"I want you to promise me something," she commanded gently. "Promise?"

"I'd do 'most anything for you, Mollie," he said.

"It is this: I wish you to take some of my money for the years in Paris. Don't draw away. Promise me you will. The money comes so easily, means so little to me! And you would do so much with it. I should feel that all your success was mine, too, and that would make me glad. You would not begrudge me that happiness, Will? You care enough for me not to mind my having a part?"

He endeavored gently to release himself.

"Promise to take the money," she insisted, and, placing her hands on either cheek, she forced him to look at her.

"You won't?" she asked. "You won't do that for me?"

"I could n't do it, Mollie. I love you for it, but I could n't. Besides, there's no necessity."

"Why can't you?" she insisted.

"I should n't feel right doing it," he answered. "I'll get along all right. I can earn enough to make my way. And the credit will be yours just as truly as though you sent me a weekly allowance. I'm afraid I could n't take your money unless you let me marry you. Then, of course, it would be all right. Many of our best citizens live on their wives' money."

"I could n't go so far as that," she said, trying to laugh at his irony.

He kissed her gently.

"Will you do something for me?" he asked. "Something better for you perhaps than to marry me?"

"Why should I," she flashed, "when you will do nothing for me?"

"It is that you give up this sort of thing." He nodded his head to indicate the surroundings as a whole. "Go into the legitimate, Mollie. Save your money for the hard times you'll find there. Remember, I've my ideal of you. And I don't like to see you in this. So give it up for my sake."

She stood apart from him and her lips trembled, though she seemed to laugh through her tears.

"Would you have me do all that for your sake?" she asked in a queer voice.

"If it is n't too much to ask," he answered humbly.

She choked and replied between a laugh and a sob, "Then I'll do it—for your sake. You see, yours will be the credit when I'm playing *Lady Macbeth* to stupendous audiences."

"And yours," he said gravely, "when I paint the portraits of our leading citizens. Do you think we'll find compensation in the doing, Mollie?"

"We must n't ever think of that again," she said firmly. "Now go. Write me sometimes."

When he had kissed her good-by and gone away she dropped her head amid the toilet silver and cried quietly. Lipski found her thus when he came to discover the cause for the delay of the final act.

"It's a nervous breakdown," she said, and dried her eyes calmly. "I must quit. I can't stand it any longer."

"But the dresses!" he cried in consternation.

"You can have them refitted for Miss Dutton," she answered indifferently, and tore to bits the pink slip of paper somewhat blistered with tears.

"Eighteen thousand a week, contract, salary, trouble for me, all nothing!" said Lipski and spread his hands hopelessly. "Only a fool would be in the theatrical business and have dealing with these actresses. When can you take your part again?"

"When I recover," said she, "I shall go into the legitimate as an understudy to Mrs. Clarke in Shakespearean roles."

"Then, why did you give me all this trouble and expense, if you had such crazy notions as that? Why did n't you try to act Shakespeare before, if you think you can?"

"I thought I needed the money," she said, "and now I find I don't."

"You are crazy, girl," said Lipski, with utter conviction.

The Art Editor had much the same opinion to express of Jenkins.



SHORT-STORY MASTERPIECES

SECOND SERIES—RUSSIAN

IV. COMRADES

By Maxim Gorky

DONE INTO ENGLISH BY JOHN COURNOS, AND WITH
INTRODUCTION BY THE EDITOR

GORKY, THE BITTER

SOME day we shall be indebted to the clear-visioned critic who will expound for us the true place of the unpleasant, the terrible, even the horrible, in fiction; and the study would not be complete without a thorough-going examination of Russian literature generally, and the writings of Maxim Gorky in particular.

Such an inquiry—which I must only touch upon—would doubtless focus upon two factors of importance: the one a primary cause—the nature of the author as conditioned by self, environment and nationality; the other a secondary cause—the ultimate purposes of fiction. Phrased differently, we have the two elements: what an author writes because he is what and where he is, and what he writes deliberately.

Reference has already been made, in these introductory studies, to the sombre, hopeless, and even tragic tone of Russian life—a tone sounded deeply in its literature. In fact, the broader the sweep of view, the more instances stand forth to support the statement that all Muscovite art feels the same impulse—witness in an exemplary and typical way the paintings of Verestchagin and the music of Tschaikovsky. It is an inviting theme, this one of why one nation should drink fiery vodka, another phlegmatic beer, and yet another light wine. Are the national characteristics which plainly go with drinks and foods and pleasures, causes, in the final analysis, or effects? Do servitude and stolidity and hopelessness on the one hand, and thin-nostriled freedom and lofty spirit on the other, arise from forces which the historian may trace clearly to their political well-springs, or are there certain imponderable potencies in the air of different lands which in the very beginning of things instilled a spirit of fatalism into the Moslem, nihilism into the Russian, emotionalism into the French, and a nervous need for action into the American?

When outward national conditions change, or when nations are transplanted, precisely what is it in climate that breeds essentially the same strain cycle after cycle?

So we should have to dissect, weigh, and classify all available facts about Russia past and present in order to get an unclouded understanding of the national temper, just as a similar study of Gorky's antecedents and life, for instance, would illuminate his literary expressions. Each of these studies would be consistent with the other, for Gorky is a national figure, though, as all such iconoclastic spirits will, he out-russias his own middle-class countrymen in outspoken unfaith in and defiance of the god-of-things-as-they-are.

The second great factor for finding the place and potency of the unpleasant, the bitter, and the terrible in fiction consists in the purpose of fiction, which broadly is one of two: either to picture forth life or to interpret life. When the fictional artist—granted that he is clear-headed—sets out to hold the mirror relentlessly up to life, he becomes an extreme realist. When he faithfully paints life as he sees it, sincerely using his selective powers so as to present *what he conceives to be* types rather than mere personalities, and thus interprets life for those of less penetrative and constructive vision, we have a philosophical realist. When he takes liberties with the *spirit* of facts (not merely with the facts themselves, which may be just as real in one order as in another), he is a romancer. When he uses facts to support and enforce ideals of his own, he is an idealist.

Thus all fiction, so far as it has a respectable purpose at all, falls easily into one class or the other—that which merely re-presents life, or that which interprets life while it re-presents it. All the farther motives—amusement, teaching, excoriation, demagoguery, what not—line up behind these two prime purposes.

Now, how does all this bear upon the place of unpleasant fiction? Very vitally, and we are considering Gorky—a highly morbid and at times revolting writer—as a notable example of this rather Russian characteristic. In him we have a spirit who looks at facts, despises all palliations, dares greatly for his convictions, and in it all is Russian through and through. Such a man, of such a history, in such a period, in such a land, with such a motive of truth-telling, for such a purpose of reform, *could not write pleasant, tinkly fiction*. Russians read him because Russia must read him. An author draws men to his message either because they need it without liking it, or like it already. First of all, Gorky is himself—a soul sensitive to the tragic, the morbid, the bitter—then he boldly gives Russia her own self-made wormwood to drink while she thirsts in the hour of her crucifixion.

With two classes I have no sympathy: writers who pander to morbid, dirty tastes, and readers who support gruesome, nasty writers for pure

love of noisome pestilence. No more do we have need for the not-impure and not-revolting yet depressing and pessimistic fiction which serves no good purpose beyond that of producing revenue. The place for such unpleasant, unhappy-beginning, tearful-middle, and sorrowful-ending stories is precisely nowhere. But in Gorky we have a queer contradiction of conditions: some of his most revolting fiction is as important to the Muscovite land which bred it as light is vital to a dark place. Yet when some one of these poignant, dreadful diagnoses of Russian sicknesses is translated and spread abroad, say in English, it should be read only by those who are students of the writer and his country, and not by the young or the morbid. It is needful to expose ulcers in a clinic, it is indecent and disgusting to parade them on the street. In a word: the horrible in fiction needs be justified by a high purpose.

In "The Exorcism," a thousand-word sketch, Gorky has produced a terrible illustration of how worse than useless such material may be for purposes of general reading in translation, while originally serving a tremendous moral purpose by showing his own people what beasts some of their fellows are.

Along a village street a strange procession is moving slowly with wild howls. The dense, wave-like crowd surrounds a cart. Tied by her wrists to a rope attached to the cart is a slight, almost girlish woman—entirely nude. Dazed, halting, gazing into nothing with wide, lack-lustre look, she staggers bleeding on. Now and again a tall peasant standing in the cart, his white canine teeth showing, his eyes blood-shot from fury, lays a lash upon the woman's body, already covered with unspeakable slashes and bruises. And every fiendish brutality—detailed and repeated until the soul sickens—the men, women, and children of the mob acclaim!

"This," he concludes, "which I have written above, is not an allegorical description of the persecution and torture of a prophet, who has no honor in his own country—no, unfortunately, it is not that! It is called an 'exorcism.' Thus do husbands punish their wives for infidelity; this is a picture from life, a custom—and I beheld it in the year 1891, on the 15th of July, in the village of Kandybovko, Government of Kherson."

Need I say that I have toned down the horror of this presentment, and that I relate it, horrible still, to show the very futility of such pictures as pictures, and their very great worth, *to those concerned*, as pleas for reform?

The readers of modern fiction need to look this question full in the face and then make their feelings known to the magazines. There is a place for all pathological studies, whether of society, soul, or body, by priest, physician, sociologist, and novelist. But is that place either the market-place or a fiction-printing magazine whose pages invite the scru-

tiny of children as well as morbid adults? If we segregate bodily pestilence, why should the public magazine and the public playhouse be allowed to spread contagion? Is there no difference between an earnest fictional presentation of moral problems which must be solved more or less publicly, and the mere skilful portrayal of lust and degradation and easy morals, with no possible resultant good? If a hatter took it into his head to be interested in smallpox, what would the authorities say? Well, shall magazines be exposed for general circulation because that same hatter, and a million of his like, love dirty, crime-teaching, and viciously morbid fiction? Some one must be brave enough to declare the difference between "frank" fiction in books for those who really wish to study social problems (and there are too many filthy books sold under the guise of social study) and the printing of such material in the magazines which make appeal to families for their circulation. We *can* keep such books out of the home and the library if we wish, but when vicious short-stories creep into otherwise clean magazines, the damage is great enough to be serious.

But Gorky's fiction is not unclean, as a rule, even when it deals with "broad" subjects. He moves directly and simply among the facts of an unlovely and often brutalized life and tells the truth about it without interpretation or apology. For example, here is the story of "The Khan and His Son," as told by a blind mendicant. It is more romantic than most of Gorky's work.

Mosolaima el Asvab, an old Crimean Khan, is possessed of many women in his harem, who love "the old eagle" for the noble fire of his spirit, which age has not quenched. One above all others is his favorite, a Kazák prisoner maid from the steppes of the Dnyépr. Once when the Khan's much-loved son, Alhalla, returns from a victorious raid on the Russians, the father exchanges with him words of affection and rashly makes the time-honored oriental promise: "What wilt thou take from the hand of thy father, Alhalla? Tell me, and I will give thee everything, according to thy desire."

And the son asks of his father the one thing the old man loves best and leans upon in his old age—the Russian prisoner maid.

The Khan spake not—for a space he said no word, for so long as was required to crush the shudder in his heart—and, after this pause, he said, boldly and firmly:

"Take her! Let us finish the feast, and then thou shalt take her."

The son knows what his request means, and soon they fall to talking of the sacrifice required. But to the pleadings of the old Khan the son returns only the argument of his own love for the girl. At length the young man proposes that "in mercy to each other" they fling her into the sea from the mountain, and in despair the Khan consents.

Summoned by her lord, the girl divines all, and asks only that she be carried to the place of sacrifice in the arms of her "old eagle," whom she loves. And so they slowly journey to the cliff, and by his arms she is flung into the sea.

The son at last turns away, but—

With swift strides the Khan approached the brink, and hurled himself down. His son did not hold him back, there was no time for that. And again nothing was audible from the sea—neither shriek nor noise of the Khan's fall. Only the waves plashed on there, and the wind hummed wild songs.

Long did Tolaik Alhalla gaze below, and then he said aloud:

"And grant me, also, as stout a heart, O Allah!"

And then he went forth into the gloom of the night.

..... Thus perished Khan Mosolaima el Asvab, and Tolaik Alhalla became Khan of the Crimea.

Of all his varied and acrid experiences the brain of "Maxim the Bitter," as his pseudonym means, is a bursting note-book. From it he selects with entire artlessness—that is, without either the patience or the knowledge which true art presupposes—whatever he needs for his fictional work. Hence his longer productions, novels and plays, are not well constructed. Indeed, they are marvellous mixtures of idealism, realism, humor, shocking openness, and drivel, illuminated in sudden patches by exquisite descriptions and lofty beauties. The best example of his novels is "Fomá Gordyéef," and his strongest play is "The Night Asylum."

The general tone of Gorky's work is not so depressing, because not so hopeless, as that of his fellow fiction-writers of the younger generation; but none of them dives so deep into the sub-silt of the great Russian stream, for none is native to its turgid, fetid flow. To witness before our eyes, for example, the dragging down of the girl in the short-story "Twenty-Six and One Other," is so terrible as to revolt the hardened. Yet in his tramps, his thieves, his broken-down derelicts, there is a certain impudent bravery that strikes a new note of hopefulness for submerged Russia. It is this, I think, that endeared the young apostle of the proletariat when from 1892 to 1897 his greatest short fictional work was done. He not only had a message for revolutionary Russia, but the spirit of his characters was precisely what so many of the drifting, sodden wrecks needed—boldness to look up.

For many superficial English and American readers Gorky furnished what Professor Phelps has aptly compared to a slumming party—they were pleased to be nauseated. Naturally, they soon dropped the new toy. But others have continued to read him, some because they are in sympathy with the reform movement, some from sheer enjoyment of the terrible, others for the flashes of genius which are frequent enough to remind us that he has not lived up to the anticipations his earlier writings

evoked. In this country, he has lost general sympathy, especially since his comparatively recent visit culminated in the disclosure of his illicit relations with his travelling companion, and much consequent newspaper gossip; so that on the whole we wait for another to wear the mantle of Tolstoi, which so many, six years ago, were ready to cast upon the shoulders of Maxim Gorky.

Gorky has had a wild and varied life,—but he may tell the story in his own words:

I was born March 14, either in 1868 or 1869, in Nijni Novgorod, in the family of Vassili Vassilezvitsch Kaschirin, dyer, to his daughter Warwara, and Maxim Sawwatjev Pjeschkow, who, according to his sign, was an upholsterer. Thenceforth I have borne honorably and without a stain the title of a member of the guild of artists. I was baptized by the name of Alexei, but in choosing a pseudonym I preferred my father's name, Maxim.

My real name is therefore Alexei Maximowitsch Pjeschkow. My father died in Astrakhan when I was five years old. After the death of my mother my grandfather placed me in a shoe-store. I was then nine years old, and my grandfather had taught me to read in the Psalter and Prayer Book. I ran away from my studies and became a draughtsman's apprentice; ran away from him and entered the workshop of a painter of saints' images; then I served on a steamer as a cook's boy; then I became a gardener's assistant.

Here I remained till my fifteenth year, spending all my time zealously reading the productions of known authors, such as "Quak; or, Unshakable Fidelity," "Andreas Fearnaught," "Jaschka, the Cut-throat," etc.

While I was serving as cook's boy on the steamboat, the cook, Smury, gained a powerful influence over my development. He persuaded me to read the "Legends of the Saints," Eccarthausen, Gogol, Gljeb Uspenski, Dumas *père*, and various books on Freemasonry.

Up to that time I had been a sworn enemy of all books and of all printed paper, even including my passport. After my fifteenth year I felt a passionate wish to learn, in pursuance of which I betook myself to Kasan, under the impression that knowledge would be imparted free to all who desired it. It turned out, however, that this was not the case; so I went to work in a pretzel bakery, at a salary of three rubles a month.

Of all the kinds of work I have tried this was the hardest. In Kasan I came into relations with the "Lost People" and lived long with them. I worked in the villages on the Volga, now as a woodchopper, now as a porter, and during this time read every book I could lay my hands on, which various kind people supplied me with. I got along very badly, and in 1888 even tried to kill myself by shooting a bullet into my body.

I lay a long time in the hospital, but finally recovered and went into the apple trade. I finally turned my back on inhospitable Kasan, to try my luck in Zarizyn, where I got a job as a railroad attendant. Then I returned to Nijni, where I had to go up for the army. But since they could not make use of fellows with holes in their bodies, I escaped the fate of becoming a soldier, and instead became a Munich beer seller.

I soon exchanged this calling for that of a clerk in the office of Lanin, a lawyer of Nijni Novgorod.

That was a turning point in my life. Lanin's influence on my development was immeasurably great. I owe this cultivated and great-hearted man more than to any one else. But, however agreeable I found life with Lanin, where my soul could at last find room to breathe, I was again impelled to the life of a tramp. And I have tramped all over Russia. Where have I not been! What have I not seen and suffered! What kind of work have I not done!

COMRADES

I.

THE burning July sun blazed dazzlingly over Smolkena, pouring down upon the old huts a generous stream of resplendent rays.

A goodly share of the sunlight fell to the roof of the *Starosta's** hut, newly re-covered with smoothly-planed, yellow, fragrant planks. It was Sunday, and almost the entire population of the village had gone out into the street, thickly overgrown with grass and bespattered in spots with quantities of dry mud. A large group of peasants—men and women—had gathered in front of the *Starosta's* hut. Some sat on the earthwork around the house, others simply stood; while the children chased one another in and out of the throng, calling forth from the elders rebukes and blows.

The centre of the crowd was a tall man, with large, drooping mustaches. To judge from his swarthy face, covered with thick gray bristles and a network of deep wrinkles, as well as from the gray tufts of hair which forced their way from under the dirty straw hat, he might have been fifty years of age. He was gazing on the ground, and the nostrils of his large, gristly nose were quivering; and when he raised his head, throwing his glance upon the windows of the *Starosta's* hut, his eyes—large, melancholy, and even morose—became visible; they were sunk deep within their orbits, and the bushy brows cast shadows over their dark pupils. He was dressed in the brown under-cassock of a lay-brother, worse for the wear; it hardly covered his knees, and was girt with cord. Over his back was flung a bag; in his right hand he carried a long stick with iron ferrule; his left hand he held in his bosom. The people eyed him suspiciously, derisively, with contempt; and with evident joy in having caught a wolf before he had had time to do hurt to their flock. He was passing through the village, and had asked for a drink at the window of the *Starosta's* hut. The *Starosta* gave him cider and entered into conversation with him. The wayfarer, however, unlike his kind, answered unwillingly. The *Starosta* asked him for his pass-

* Head of village community.

port, but none was forthcoming. It was decided to send him to the local magistrate. The *Starosta* chose as the man's escort the village deputy, and was now in the hut giving him directions, having in the meantime left the prisoner in the midst of the mob which made sport of him.

The prisoner stood near the trunk of a willow and rested against it his stooped back.

Presently there appeared on the staircase of the hut a dim-eyed old man, with a foxy face and a gray, wedge-shaped beard. He lowered his booted feet step by step, measuredly, and his round stomach moved from side to side solidly under the long calico shirt. Just over his shoulder came to view the bearded, four-cornered face of the deputy.

"Do you understand me, Efimushka?" the *Starosta* questioned the deputy.

"Why should n't I understand? It's easy enough. Simply means I am to take this man to the magistrate—and there's an end of it!" The deputy, pronouncing his speech with measured emphasis and with comical dignity, winked at the public.

"And the papers?"

"The papers are stuck away in my bosom."

"Well, all right, then," said the *Starosta*, and, scratching his sides energetically, he added:

"Go, and God be with you!"

"Well, shall we march on, father?" said the deputy to the prisoner.

"You might furnish a conveyance," grumbled the prisoner at the deputy's proposition.

The *Starosta* smiled.

"A con—vey—ance? The idea! There are lots of you fellows tramping across fields and villages. Where are all the horses to come from? You've got to make it on foot; that's all there's to it!"

"That's nothing, father; let us go," said the deputy cheerfully. "Do you think it so far? Can't be more than twenty versts! You'll be there before you know it. We shall make a nice trip of it. And afterwards you shall have a rest."

"In a cool place," explained the *Starosta*.

"That's nothing," the deputy hastened to say. "A man, when he is very tired, will find rest even in jail. And especially after a hot day you will find it cool and comfortable there."

The prisoner eyed his escort sharply; the latter smiled good-naturedly and frankly.

"Well, come along, honest father! Good-by, Vasil Gavrlich! Let's go!"

"God be with you, Efimushka! Use both your eyes."

"Yes, you'll have to look sharp!" was the suggestion thrown at the deputy by a young peasant in the crowd.

"What do you think I'm an infant?"

They started, keeping close to the huts, so as to be within the strip of shadow. The man in the cassock walked in front, with the loose but rapid gait of a being accustomed to roaming. The deputy, with a sturdy stick in his hand, followed.

Efimushka was a little peasant, low in stature, but built strongly, with a broad, good-natured face framed in an unkempt red beard beginning just below his bright gray eyes. He nearly always smiled at something, showing his healthy yellow teeth, and wrinkling his nose as if he wanted to sneeze. He was dressed in a long garment whose folds were caught up at the waist with a belt, so that they might not hamper his feet; on his head was stuck a dark green cap, without a visor, reminding one of a prisoner's cap.

His companion moved on as if oblivious of another presence. They walked along by a narrow by-path, which wound its way through a billowy sea of rye; and the shadows of the travellers glided along against the gold of the corn.

Looking towards the horizon, the crest of a wood appeared blue against the sky. To the left stretched endlessly field upon field; in their midst, like a dark patch, lay a village; and beyond the village again fields, losing themselves finally in the bluish haze.

To the right, from behind a group of willows, a church spire covered with tin-plate, as yet unpainted, pierced the blue sky. It glistened so strongly in the sun that it was painful to look at.

Up high the larks twittered; and in the rye the cornflowers smiled; and it was hot—almost stifling. From under the feet of the travellers the dust flew up.

Efimushka, clearing his throat, began to sing in falsetto voice.

"It's no use. I can't make my voice carry! And yet—there was a time when I could sing. . . . The Vishensky teacher would say, 'Well, Efimushka, make a start!' And we would sing together! A fine fellow he was, too!"

"Who was he?" asked the man in the cassock, in a dull bass voice.

"The Vishensky teacher."

"Was Vishensky his name?"

"No, brother; that's the name of the village. The teacher's name was Pavel Mikhalevich. A first-rate sort he was. Died three years ago."

"Was he young?"

"He was n't thirty."

"What did he die of?"

"Of grief, I take it."

Efimushka's companion glanced at him askance and smiled.

"You see, my dear fellow, this is how it happened. He taught—seven years at a stretch he taught. Well, he began to cough. He coughed and he coughed, and then got to grieving. . . . Well, you know how it is—grief drove him to drink. And Father Alexei did not like him; and when he started drinking, Father Alexei sent a report to town—told this and that: the teacher is drinking, and that sort of thing. It's a scandal, to be sure. And the people in town sent back an answer and a woman teacher. She was tall, bony, big-nosed. Well, Pavel Mikhalevich saw how things stood. He felt hurt. 'Here,' thought he, 'I have taught and taught . . . and now you—' . . . From the school he went straight to the hospital, and within five days gave up his soul to God. . . . That's all."

For a time they went on in silence. They were approaching the wood, which with every step loomed larger and larger and was turning from blue to green.

"Shall we go by the wood?" asked Efimushka's fellow traveller.

"We will only catch the edge of it, for a half-verst or so. But what are you up to? I shall keep my eye on you, my good man."

And Efimushka, shaking his head, laughed.

"What ails you?" the prisoner asked.

"Oh, nothing! But you are a funny one! 'Shall we go by the wood?' says he. You are a simpleton, dear fellow; another would n't have asked this question—that is, if he were any smarter. He would have made straight for the wood, and—"

"Well?"

"Oh, nothing! I see through you, brother. Your game is like a very thin reed! I should advise you to drop this idea about the wood! Do you think you can get around me? I can handle three like you; as for you, I can manage you with my left hand. Do you understand?"

"Understand you? You're a fool!" said the prisoner simply but with emphasis.

"Ah, I hit the mark that time!" said Efimushka triumphantly.

"Blockhead! What mark did you hit?" asked the prisoner, with a wry smile.

"About the wood. I understand, I do. You were thinking that when we reached the wood you would knock me down—yes, knock me down—and then make a break for the fields or for the woods. Now, is n't that so?"

"You're a fool," said the apprehended man, shrugging his shoulders.

"Where could I go?"

"Well, where you wish—that's your affair."

"But where?"

Efimushka's companion was either angry or else he really wished to know from his escort precisely in what direction he could run.

"I told you, where you wished," replied Efimushka calmly.

"There's nowhere I could run, nowhere!" said his companion quietly.

"W-well!" the escort pronounced incredulously, and waved his hand. "There's always some place where one could run to. The world is large. There will be always enough room in it for one man."

"Tell me, then: do you really want me to run away?" the prisoner, smiling, ventured to ask.

"Ah, you! You are terribly good! What will come of it? You'll run away, and in your place some one else will have to go to jail. And that one will be me. No, I'm simply making conversation."

"You are a blessed fool—otherwise you seem a good sort of fellow," said Efimushka's companion, uttering a sigh. Efimushka quite agreed with him.

"It is true I am called blessed by some people; and that I'm a good fellow is also true. I am a simple man—that's at the bottom of it. Other people say things with cunning, in an underhand sort of way, but why should I? I am alone in the world. Deal wrongly—and you die; deal rightly—you die also. And so I've kept straight, mostly."

"That is the right way," remarked the prisoner indifferently.

"How else should it be? Why should I let my soul go wrong when I am alone here? I am a free man, brother. As I wish, so I live. I have my own idea of life, and live according to it. So it goes. By the way, how are you called?"

"How? Well, you may call me Ivan Ivanov."

"So! Are you of the priesthood?"

"N-no."

"Well? And I thought you were—"

"Because of my dress?"

"Well, you look like a runaway monk or an unfrocked priest. . . . But your face is not at all suited; it looks more like a soldier's. God knows what kind of man you are!" Efimushka cast a curious glance at the stranger. The other sighed, readjusted his hat, wiped the perspiration from his forehead, and asked the deputy:

"Do you smoke?"

"Happy to afford you the pleasure. To be sure, I do!"

He drew out of his bosom a soiled pouch and, lowering his head, without decreasing his gait, began to fill a clay pipe with tobacco.

"Well, have your smoke." The prisoner paused, inclined his head to receive a light from a match held by the convoy, and drew in his cheeks. A thin blue smoke rose in the air.

"You have n't told me as yet to what class you belong."

"The gentry," replied the prisoner curtly, and spat out sideways.

"So that's it! How come you, then, to be strolling about without a passport?"

"I simply choose to."

"So—so! What an occupation! You gentry do not usually take to this wolfish life. Ah, but you are a poor wretch!"

"Well, let it go at that . . . and stop your chattering," remarked the poor wretch dryly.

Efimushka, however, surveyed the passportless man with increased curiosity and interest, and, shaking his head in a perplexed manner, continued:

"Eh, but how fate does play with a man, when you come to think of it! And it is very likely true that you are of the gentry, because you have a grand manner about you. Have you lived long like this?"

The man with the grand manner looked gloomily at Efimushka, and waved him aside like some pestering wasp.

"Drop it, I tell you! Why do you stick at it like a woman?"

"Now, don't be vexed," said Efimushka reassuringly. "I speak from the heart . . . and I am really kind-hearted. . . ."

"Well, that's lucky for you. . . . On the other hand, your tongue keeps on babbling without a stop—that's unlucky for me!"

"No more, then, since you object. I can keep quiet, since you want none of my conversation. Still, you're vexed for nothing. Is it my fault that you are leading a vagabond's life?"

The prisoner stopped and clamped his jaws together so that his cheekbones stood out like two sharp corners and the gray bristle covering them rose rigidly on end. He measured Efimushka from head to foot with passionate disdain and with a screwed-up expression at the eyes. Before Efimushka could note this, the other once more began to measure the ground with a broad stride.

The face of the loquacious deputy assumed an aspect of distraught pensiveness. He gazed upwards, whence sounded the trills of the larks, and with them whistled between his teeth, at the same time swinging his stick to the measure of his steps.

They approached the edge of the forest. It stood there like an immovable, dark wall. Not a sound came from it to greet the travellers. The sun already had set, and its oblique rays colored the tops of the trees purple and gold. The trees exhumed a fragrant dampness; and the gloom and the concentrated silence which filled the forest gave birth to sombre feelings.

When a forest stands before us dark and immovable, when it is all plunged in a mysterious silence, and every tree assumes the attitude as of listening to something, then it seems that the entire forest is filled with something alive, and that that something is only hiding for a time. And you await the next moment in the expectation that it will bring forth something huge and incomprehensible to the human mind, and that it will speak in a mighty voice about the great mysteries of creation.

II.

At the edge of the wood, Efimushka and his companion decided to rest, and so they sat themselves on the grass beside the trunk of a huge oak. The prisoner slowly took down the bag from his shoulder and asked his convoy indifferently:

"Do you want some bread?"

"If you 'll give me, I 'll not refuse," Efimushka replied with a smile.

And in silence they began to eat their bread. Efimushka ate slowly and sighed continually, directing his gaze across the field to his left, somewhere into the distance, while his companion was all absorbed in the process of gratifying his appetite. He ate rapidly and munched audibly, measuring with his eyes his crust of bread. The dusk began to settle upon the field, and the corn had already lost its golden lustre and assumed a rose-yellow hue. Towards the southwest small, fleecy clouds advanced across the sky; they cast shadows upon the field and crept across the ears of corn towards the forest, where sat two dark human figures. Other shadows were cast on the ground by the trees, and they breathed melancholy into the soul.

"Glory be to Thee, O Lord!" exclaimed Efimushka, gathering up the crumbs of his piece of bread and licking them up from the palm of his hand with his tongue. "The Lord hath fed us—no one hath seen us; and He who hath seen us, His eye was unoffended! Comrade, what do you say to sitting here another hour or so? Plenty time for the cold cell, eh?"

His comrade nodded his assent.

"Well, well. . . . A very good place—it has a place in my heart. . . . Over there, to the left, once stood the manor of the Tuchkovs."

"Where?" quickly inquired the prisoner, wheeling around in the direction indicated by Efimushka.

"Over there, behind that hill. All the land hereabouts belonged to them. They were very rich; but after the emancipation they did n't do as well. . . . I too belonged to them—all of us belonged to them. It was a big family. . . . There was the Colonel himself—Alexander Nikitich Tuchkov. Then, there were four sons—where could they all have gone to? It is as if the wind carried them along, like leaves in the autumn. Only Ivan Alexandrovich remains—I am taking you to him now. He is our magistrate . . . quite an old man."

The prisoner laughed. His laugh had a hollow sound in it; it was a strange inward sort of laugh: his chest and stomach shook, but the face remained unmoved; and when he showed his teeth, there issued from between them hollow, dog-like sounds.

Efimushka, trembling apprehensively, reached out for his stick and placed it nearer within his reach. He asked:

"What is the matter with you now?"

"Nothing. . . . It was just a passing thought," said the prisoner abruptly, but kindly. "Go on with your story."

"W-well, yes. As I was saying, they were important people, the Tuchkovs, and now they are here no more. . . . Some of them have died, some of them have simply vanished, and not a soul knows what's become of them. One especially I have in mind—the very youngest. Victor was his name—Vic for short. He was a comrade of mine. . . . At the time of the emancipation we were, both of us, fourteen years old. . . . He was a fine lad, and may God be good to his soul! A pure stream! Running along beautifully all day—and gurgling. . . . Where is he now? Is he living or dead?"

"In what way was he so good?" Efimushka's companion asked quietly.

"In every way!" exclaimed Efimushka. "He had beauty, good sense, a kind heart. . . . My dear man, he was a ripe berry. Ah, but you should have seen then the two of us! . . . The games we played! The merry life we led! There were times when he would cry, 'Efimka, let's go hunting!' He had a gun—a birthday gift from his father—and I used to carry it. And off we would wander into the woods for a whole day, or for two days, or even three! Once back home, he would get a scolding, and I a birching; the next day you'd forget all about it and start life anew. This time he would call, 'Efimushka, let us go after mushrooms!' Thousands of birds we must have killed! We gathered these mushrooms by the ton! He used to catch butterflies and bugs and stick them on pins in little boxes. And he taught me my letters. . . . 'Efimka,' he said to me, 'I will teach you. Begin,' said he, and I began. 'Say,' says he, 'A!' I roared out, 'A—a!' How we did laugh! At the start I took it as a joke—what does a man like me want with reading and writing? . . . But he rebuked me: 'You, fool, have been granted freedom that you might learn. . . . If you knew how to read, it would help you to know how to live and where to seek the truth.' . . . To be sure, he was an apt child; and he had probably heard such speeches from his elders, and began to talk that way himself. . . . Of course, we know it's nonsense. Real learning is in the heart; and only the heart can point the way to truth. . . . It is all-seeing. . . . And so he taught me. . . . Stuck so hard to his business that he gave me no rest! It was torture to me. 'Vic,' I would appeal to him, 'it's impossible for me to learn my letters. I really can't manage it!' . . . You should have seen him rage at me! Sometimes he threatened me with a whip! But teach me he would! 'Be merciful!' I'd cry. . . . Once I tried to

dodge the lesson, and there was a row, let me tell you. He sought for me all day long with a gun—wanted to shoot me. And later he told me that had he met me that day he certainly would have shot me! He was a fearless one. He was unbending and fiery—a real lord. . . . He loved me; his was an ardent soul. . . . Once my father used the birch on my back, and when Vic saw it, off he went at once to my father's house. Good Lord, but there was a scene! He was all pale and trembling, and clenched his fists, and followed my father up into the loft. Says he, 'How dared you?' The old man replied, 'But I'm his father!' 'So? Very well, father, I can't manage you single-handed, but your back all the same shall be like Efimka's!' He gave way to tears after that, and ran out of the house. . . . And what do you say to this? He actually carried out his word. He must have said something to his servants, for one day father came home groaning; he tried to take off his shirt, and it stuck to his back. . . . My father was very angry with me at the time. 'I'm suffering on your account. You are an informer.' And he gave me a good beating. But as to being an informer, that I was not. . . ."

"That's true, Efim, you were not!" said the prisoner, with emphasis, and trembled violently. "It's evident even now that you could n't have been an informer," he added hastily.

"That's it!" exclaimed Efimushka. "I simply loved him—this fellow Vic. . . . Such a talented child he was! All loved him, not alone I. . . . Fine speeches he used to make. . . . I can't remember any of them now—thirty years have passed since then. . . . Oh, Lord! Where is he now? If he is alive, he must be having a grand job, or else—he is having the very devil of a time of it. . . . Life is a most strange thing! It seethes and seethes—and still nothing comes of it. . . . And people perish. . . . It is pitiful, to the very death, how pitiful!"

Efimushka, sighing deeply, inclined his head on his bosom. . . . There was a brief silence.

"And are you sorry for me?" asked the prisoner cheerfully, while his face lit up with a good, kindly smile.

"You are a queer one!" exclaimed Efimushka. "Why should n't I feel sorry for you? What are you, when you come to think of it? If you are roaming about, that only shows that you have n't a thing on earth of your own—not a corner, not a chip. . . . And, aside from that, perhaps you are burdened with some great sin—who knows? In a word, you're a miserable man."

"That's how it is," replied the prisoner.

Once more there was a pause. The sun had already set, and the shadows grew more dense. The air was fragrant with the fresh moisture of the earth, with the smell of flowers, and with that pungent odor that comes from the woods. For a long time they sat there in silence.

"It is fine to sit here; but, for all that, we've got to go. Still eight more versts to do. . . . Come along, father; get up!"

"Let's sit here a while longer," begged the other.

"I don't mind it myself—I love to be near the woods at night. . . . But when shall we ever get to the magistrate's? I will catch it if I get there late."

"Never fear, they shan't say anything."

"Perhaps you'll put in a word for me," said the deputy, with a smile.

"I may."

"You?"

"And why not?"

"You're a wag! He'll try a little pepper on you."

"You mean, he'll flog me?"

"He's a terror! And right clever, too. He'll punch you with his fist on the ear, and I'll warrant you—you'll not be steady on your feet."

"We'll see to that," said the prisoner reassuringly, touching the convoy's shoulder in a friendly manner.

This familiarity did not please Efimushka. Everything else considered, he, after all, stood for the law, and this goose should bear in mind that Efimushka wore under his coat a brass badge. Efimushka arose, took his stick in his hand, rearranged the badge in a conspicuous place on his breast, and said gruffly:

"Get up! We've got to be on the move."

"I am not going," said the prisoner.

Efimushka was nonplussed, and, opening his eyes wide, remained for the moment silent—not comprehending why the prisoner had become all of a sudden such a joker.

"Well, don't make a fuss, and come along," said he more softly.

"I am not going," the prisoner repeated resolutely.

"What do you mean by saying you're not going?" shouted Efimushka, in astonishment and anger.

"Just that. I want to spend the night with you here. Come, build a fire."

"Let you spend the night here, will I? As to the fire, I'll build it on your back, I will," growled Efimushka. But in the depths of his soul he was amazed. Here is a man who says, "I am not going," and yet shows no opposition, nor any desire to quarrel, but simply lies on the ground, and that's all. What is one to do?

"Don't shout so, Efim," suggested the prisoner calmly.

Efimushka again became silent, and, changing his weight from foot to foot, he looked down on the prisoner with wide-awake eyes. But the other returned his gaze and smiled. Efimushka was thinking very hard as to what his next move should be.

What he could not understand was that this vagabond, who had been

all the time morose and malignant in his manner, should suddenly develop such good spirits. What was to prevent Efimushka from falling on the fellow, wrenching his arms, hitting him once or twice across the neck, and ending this farce? Assuming the most severe, authoritative tone of which he was capable, Efimushka said:

"Well, you piece of putty, enough of that! Up with you! Or else I'll bind you—and then you'll go along all right, never fear! Do you understand me? Well? I'll flog you!"

"M-me?" asked the prisoner, with a chuckle.

"Whom else do you think?"

"What, you'll flog Vic Tuchkov?"

"None of that, now!" cried the astonished Efimushka. "But who are you, really? What sort of game are you playing?"

"Don't shout so, Efimushka; it is time you recognized me," said the prisoner, smiling calmly, and rising to his feet. "Why don't you say 'how d' you do?'"

Efimushka drew back from the hand stretched out to him, and, open-eyed, looked into the face of the prisoner. Then his lips trembled and his face contracted.

"Victor Alexandrovich! . . . Really, is it you?" he asked in a whisper.

"If you insist, I'll show you my papers. But I'll do better—I'll remind you of old times. . . . Now, let me see—do you remember how you once fell into a wolves' lair in the pine forest of Ramensk? And how I climbed up a tree after a nest and hung head downwards from a limb? And how we stole cream from the old woman Petrovna? And the tales she told us?"

Overpowered by this recital, Efimushka sat down on the ground and laughed in a confused manner.

"Do you believe now?" the prisoner asked, as he sat down at Efimushka's side, looking straight in his companion's face and placing his hand on his shoulder. Efimushka was silent. The landscape had grown dark by this time. In the forest arose a confused murmuring and whispering. Somewhere from its distant depths came the sounds of a night-bird's song. A cloud was passing over the wood with an almost imperceptible motion.

"What ails you, Efim? Aren't you glad to meet me, or are you so glad? Eh, you holy soul! As you were as a babe, so are you now. Well, Efim! Say something, dear creature!"

Efimushka tried to control himself.

"Well, brother, why don't you speak?" said the prisoner, shaking his head reproachfully. "What ails you, any way? You should be ashamed! Here you are in your fiftieth year, and occupied with such trifling business! Give it up!" And, taking hold of the deputy by the

shoulders, he shook him lightly. The deputy burst into laughter, and at last delivered himself, without glancing at his neighbor:

"Well, who am I? Of course, I'm glad. . . . And it's really you? How am I to believe it? You, and . . . such a business as this! Vic . . . and in such a shape! Going to jail. . . . Without passport . . . without tobacco. . . . Oh, Lord! Is that the proper order of things? At least, if I were only in your place, and you were the deputy! Even that would have been easier to bear! But instead . . . how can I look you straight in your eyes? I had always recalled you with joy . . . Vic. . . . One sometimes thinks about it. . . . And the heart aches at the thought. . . . But now—look! Oh, Lord! . . . if one were to tell people about it, they would n't believe it."

His eyes fixed intently upon the ground, he mumbled his broken phrases, and now and then gripped his hand to his bosom or to his throat.

"Never mind telling people about it; it is unnecessary. And stop lamenting. . . . Don't worry on my account. I have my papers. I did n't show them to the *Starosta*, because I did n't want to be recognized. . . . My brother Ivan shan't send me to jail, but will help to put me on my feet. I will remain with him, and once more will we two go hunting. . . . Now, you see how well everything will end."

Vic said this gently, using the intonation which elders employ in calming their aggrieved young. The passing cloud and the moon met by this time; and the edge of the cloud, touched up with the silver rays, took on a soft, opal tint. From among the corn came the cries of the quail; somewhere or other the railbird pratled. The darkness grew denser.

"To think that it's really true," began Efimushka softly. "Ivan Alexandrovich will surely lend a helping hand to his own brother; and that means you will begin life anew. It is really so. . . . And we will go hunting. . . . And yet, somehow, it is different. . . . I thought you would do things in this world! But instead, here's what it's come to!"

Vic Tuchkov laughed.

"I, brother Efimushka, have done enough deeds in my day. . . . I have squandered my share in the estate; I have given up my position in the service; I have been an actor; I have been a clerk in the lumber trade; afterwards I have had my own troupe of actors. . . . Then I lost everything, contracted debts, got mixed up in a bad affair . . . eh! I have had everything. . . . And I have lost everything!"

The prisoner waved his hand and laughed good-naturedly.

"And, brother Efimushka, I am no longer a gentleman. I am cured of that. Now we will have good times together! Eh? what do you say? Come, cheer up!"

"What should I say," began Efimushka, in a subdued voice. "I

am ashamed. I have been telling you such things . . . such nonsense! . . . I am only a peasant. . . . And we will spend the night here? I'll light a fire."

"Well, go ahead!"

The prisoner stretched himself upon the ground, face upwards, while the deputy went into the woods, from whence soon came sounds of the cracking of twigs. Presently Efimushka reappeared with an armful of firewood, and in a jiffy a small serpent of flame was merrily working its way upward through the pile of wood.

The old comrades, sitting opposite each other, watched it pensively, and took turns at smoking the pipe.

"Just as in the old days," said Efimushka sadly.

"Only, the times are not the same," said Tuchkov.

"W-well, yes, life is sterner than character. . . . Ah, but she has broken you. . . ."

"That still remains to be seen—whether I'm stronger or she," smiled Tuchkov.

They became silent.

Behind them loomed the dark wall of the softly whispering forest; the bonfire crackled merrily; around it danced the silent shadows; and across the field lay an impenetrable darkness.



JANUARY, CROWNED WITH SNOW

BY ETHEL HALLETT PORTER

JANUARY, crowned with snow,
Crystalled, diamonded, agleam,
Deep within thy heart, we know,
Dwelleth June, a far, fair dream.

Sunset hints her distant hues,
Sunrise flushes rose and gold;
Lovely memory reviews
Spring's warm beauty, thro' the cold.

Proud or beggared, glad or meek,
Nature grants this gracious boon:
We must share with all who seek,
January's dream of June.

REMINDERS FOR BOYS

By Minna Thomas Antrim

Author of "Don't's for Boys"

DON'T be "all in" too often. Invalids are bad business risks.

YOUR boss may be a boor; this, however, need not prevent you from being a gentleman.

SAVE a little from even a little; the habit will be your dividend.

DON'T be a "quitter"! When you find you are "in wrong," however, get out, no matter who hoots.

YOU may be a Kid, but refuse to be a shorn lamb.

HOBBY-HORSES need a tight rein, else they may hoof down Sense.

THE spur of the moment has fatally rowelled many a Boy.

To hedge is less manly than openly to refuse to betray your own or another's secret.

LOUD laughter belongs to the wilds. Where women are, or indoors, boys should modulate their mirth.

COWARDS are mighty Blow-Hards. If fight you must, fight, but don't Blow!

NOTHING so thoroughly emphasizes the importance of a rival or competitor as running him down.

You may be a winner among the girls; let them tell it.

For a lad with his way to make, it's more creditable to "stand in" with men than with girls.

BLUFF may go for awhile; but so may you, when your bluff is called.

If you want your Customer to ask for you next time, give him your undivided attention.

THE aftermath of "cutting a dash" is a sadly bruised spirit.

Good manners, not parlor tricks, are valuable assets.

PLAY the game—if you are sure it's a game you can afford to play.

IT'S a cheeky lad who introduces his "crowd" without a girl's say-so.

YOUR Dad being a Somebody does n't make you so. Buck up for your own.

MRS. WARREN'S EARRING

A FANTASY

By Harold Susman

MRS. WARREN had an uncle named John Rawson. Mr. Rawson was an eccentric person. He spent all his time and all his money in old curiosity shops.

He bought books and pictures, chairs and tables, odds and ends, and goodness knows what not. Most of these things he kept for himself. But some of them he gave away.

He gave some to his niece, Mrs. Warren. He gave her a French vase, a Spanish comb, and a Persian rug. And then, at Christmas, he came to see her, and he brought a present with him. It was the most peculiar present he had ever given her.

He put his hand in his pocket and took out a box. He opened the box and took out a package. He opened the package and took out—a trinket. A small, carved golden trinket.

"What is it?" said Mrs. Warren.

"What do you think it is?" said Mr. Rawson.

"I don't know," said Mrs. Warren.

"Guess!" said Mr. Rawson.

"A brooch?" said Mrs. Warren.

"No," said Mr. Rawson.

"A pendant?" said Mrs. Warren.

"No," said Mr. Rawson.

"An—earring?" said Mrs. Warren.

"Yes!" said Mr. Rawson.

Mr. Rawson handed it to her. Mrs. Warren examined it.

It was an improbable ornament of an impossible design. It represented a gargoyle. An objectionable gargoyle. An indescribably objectionable gargoyle.

"It is an earring," said Mr. Rawson. "A mediæval Italian earring. It is very curious. And very valuable. There is not another like it. That is the trouble. The mate is missing. And this one could not be matched. A copy would never look the same. So you cannot wear it. You must keep it in a curio-cabinet."

Mrs. Warren did n't know what to say. She could not say, "How

beautiful!" She could not say, "How charming!" She could not say anything but, "Thank you!"

Mr. Rawson departed. And Mrs. Warren fell to wondering. What should she do with it? What could she do with it?

It was not a thing that could be worn. It was not a thing that could be displayed. She must get rid of it. She must give it away. But to whom could she give it?

First she thought of this one. And then she thought of that one. Finally she thought of Mrs. Butler. Mrs. Butler's birthday was due. So Mrs. Warren went to see her.

"I have come to wish you many happy returns of the day!" said Mrs. Warren.

"How thoughtful of you!" said Mrs. Butler.

"And to give you a little gift!" said Mrs. Warren.

"How delightful of you!" said Mrs. Butler.

Mrs. Warren showed the trinket. And Mrs. Butler stared at it.

"I thought that you would be getting boxes of candy, and baskets of flowers, and all that sort of thing," said Mrs. Warren, "and I wanted to give you something different. Something entirely different. So I got you—this!"

"What—is—it?" said Mrs. Butler.

"It is an earring," said Mrs. Warren. "A mediaeval Italian earring. It is very curious. And very valuable. There is not another like it. That is the trouble. The mate is missing. And this one could not be matched. A copy would never look the same. So you cannot wear it. You must keep it in a curio-cabinet."

Mrs. Butler looked at the trinket. And she looked shocked. Mrs. Warren departed.

Mrs. Butler looked at the ornament again. And she looked more shocked than ever. The gargoyle was certainly an odious thing.

Mrs. Butler didn't want it in her curio-cabinet. In fact, she didn't want it in her possession. So she set herself to scheming how to get rid of it.

She thought of Mrs. Holden. Mrs. Holden was going to get married again. Had Mrs. Holden been a young girl, and this her first marriage, the earring would not have seemed a suitable gift. But Mrs. Holden was a middle-aged woman, and this was her third marriage, so the earring appeared to be more appropriate. Mrs. Butler went to see Mrs. Holden.

"My dear," said Mrs. Butler, "I knew that people would be giving you asparagus-tongs, and clocks, and candlesticks. So I wanted to be original. And I think that I have been! I wanted my gift to be unique. And I think that it is!"

She showed the ornament.

"Oh, you *are* original!" said Mrs. Holden. "And your gift is unique! But—what—is—it?"

"It is an earring," said Mrs. Butler. "A mediæval Italian earring. It is very curious. And very valuable. There is not another like it. That is the trouble. The mate is missing. And this one could not be matched. A copy would never look the same. So you cannot wear it. You must keep it in a curio-cabinet."

Mrs. Butler departed. And Mrs. Holden considered.

She had, as Mrs. Butler had surmised, received asparagus-tongs, clocks, and candlesticks—in large quantities. She had also received brooches, bracelets, and rings—in small quantities. She had even received a pair of earrings. But this gargoyle was the only single earring she had received. In her innocence, she believed that it was the only single earring anybody had ever received.

She was disgusted and dismayed. How could she dispose of it?

She had sent superfluous furniture to an auctioneer. She had sent superfluous silverware to the pawnbroker. But what to do with a superfluous earring?

She finally took it to a dealer in bric-à-brac, art objects, and antiques. She displayed the trinket. The dealer scrutinized it.

"It is an earring," said Mrs. Holden.

"Yes," said the dealer.

"A mediæval Italian earring," said Mrs. Holden.

"I know," said the dealer.

"How much will you give me for it?" said Mrs. Holden.

"Ten dollars," said the dealer.

"Very well," said Mrs. Holden.

So she took the ten dollars. And the dealer took the earring.

Mr. Rawson came to see Mrs. Warren.

"A most extraordinary thing has happened!" said Mr. Rawson. "A most remarkable coincidence has occurred. In my rounds of the old curiosity shops, I have been fortunate enough to discover a duplicate of the earring I gave you, an exact match, a perfect mate! It is undoubtedly the original companion. So I have secured it, and have brought it to you. Here it is!"

And he produced the earring.

Mr. Rawson beamed. Mrs. Warren gasped. The gargoyle seemed more atrocious than ever. It seemed, in fact, the most abominable thing in all the world.

"I want you to accept it," said Mr. Rawson. "And, furthermore, you must no longer hide your light under a bushel. You must not keep these precious treasures in a curio-cabinet. You must wear them—in your ears!"

This time, Mrs. Warren could not even say "Thank you!"



WAYS OF THE HOUR

A DEPARTMENT OF CURRENT COMMENT AND
CRITICISM—SANE, STIMULATING, OPTIMISTIC

THE LAST REFUGE OF "ROMANCE"

WHERE may the last refuge of old, raw, unbridled romance now be found? I believe truly that the crimson-coated monster has discovered a new and unshakable lair in the moving-picture theatre. You enter one of these places and at once you find yourself in a remote world of false realism and mock heroics, all quite as insubstantial as the flickering shadows on the screen.

Knowing my own Far West, I am both amused and surprised at the childish faith the multitudes of the Eastern States and of England and, for that matter, of the world, display, for instance, in the impossible melodramatics of the Wild West *motifs*. Such cowboys, such Indians, such heroines, lie beyond all that is human; such adventures as bubble forth from the mad fancy of the cinematograph hack-writer and are acted by ambitious young actors and orchid-like maids before the crystal eye of the camera, would seem grotesque even in a dream. Nevertheless, to the uncritical audience, fed full with the bleak actuality of their days, these things are not lies but life, not hollow fiction but facts drawn from regions of fine adventure and keener air. The impregnable conviction that their own existences and their immediate neighbors' are humdrum and matter-of-fact only intensifies their firm belief in a better, nobler, freer existence possible only in that dim and nebulous Land of Romance. Tenaciously they cling to it and eagerly they demand it—in their reading, in their plays, in their "art." The factory-girl and the dry-goods clerk are all adventurous at heart—something *must* happen to cast a

glory of light and a shimmer of gold and the red blood of a burning passion into their machine-made lives. As experts, they know just how these things that do not befall *ought* to befall. For all their ideas of these things are preconceived, inherited, sedulously fostered, nor will they permit their own experiences to cancel or annul a single illusion. They are the victims of the spinners of fairy-tales, of the mongers of the crass melodrama.

The new lying moonshine that beguiles the millions of to-day is no longer reflected sunlight, but the harsher, deadlier white glare that streams through the lens of the picture-machine. Seeing is not only believing, but seeing done is knowing. In their shadow-shapes the villain is hissed and the hero is applauded—just as rapt Italians shout and cry over the antics of the wooden marionettes operated by heavy cords and thick iron rods.

What, then, is this strange romanticism which humanity, especially Anglo-Saxon humanity, hugs so fiercely to its heart? Is it a worship of idealized life, is it the rainbow or halo that imagination weaves about the fancied joys and happiness of a race of fairer and superior beings? Each man may furnish his own answer, and, again, each woman. One thing alone is certain—when one human being, great or obscure, is selected by fate to be the hero or victim of real romance, that unfortunate person but dimly realizes his part in the drama, and but seldom enjoys it. For it is of the essentially tragic nature of romance that it can never be realized from within. It is almost entirely a matter of appearances, of externals, of color and light, like that of the poor ghostly figures which flash across the screen in their two dimensions. The real taste of high romance is bitter as the brine of the sea, but it is as well that lovers should not too soon learn that this is so. Life is at once the mode and the arena of Nature's operations, and Nature, as we know, has need of many lies.

But the old and unregulated ideas of romance linger on in the world's heart, for the world's heart is always fuller and yet for all that always hungrier than the world's head. Once romance cast a splendor about kings, tragic lovers, and ruthless conquerors, and the false glamour these gave it still hangs about it like a poisonous phosphorescence; but steadily it sinks to levels that are more and more plebeian. Like a tree, it dies from the crown downward. The rose-fire of dawn has left the peaks of civilization, though its reflex is still artfully and artificially kept aglow for the folk in the valleys by an insidious conspiracy among writers and artists—and even syndicates!—who live by feeding the people with adulterated food for the soul and pernicious illusions about life and love.

"What!" comes the cry. "Is Romance to wither from the world and leave all things gray?" No, for that which is behind all real

romance is eternal and of the skies, but false romanticism is a disease that blights the sanity of life. It is like a drug that produces not dreams but distortion and delirium. For how much misery, frenzy, and jealousy may not blind "romantic" love be held responsible!

If the drift of the times discloses anything, it is that the more advanced elements among mankind are once more surely tending towards a new, sane, and vital classic spirit. Let none fear that sentiment, idealism, aspiration, or poesy will perish from among men, nor even a truer romance. For these are of the visions that feed the poets, and until the poets die these shall live on in the terrestrial field of the great solar cinematograph in whose beams we phantoms strive and dream.

HERMAN SCHEFFAUER

OVERLOADING THE CANAL

NOW that the opening of the Panama Canal—*our* canal—really draws nigh, we seem to be confidently expecting more and more of it. We seem to be pressing forward into the best seats, and waiting for the curtain to rise on an instantaneous prodigy of valor, a very miracle of industrial growth. Something—a new god of commercial prosperity, belike—will spring full-armed from the first tide through the isthmus.

In this case, not distance, but nearness, lends enchantment to the view. And with all honor and credit to the canal and its promoters, it is to be tried under a tremendous handicap.

The canal is a big project. Big projects move slowly. Their advance depends upon a host of lesser objects. Many jubilant citizens, the country over, apparently expect that the formal opening of the canal will disgorge from ocean to ocean an immediate stream of ships, scurrying to carry their cargoes by short-cut to profitable ports. These ports are waiting. Scarce a harbor on the Pacific Coast but anticipates (according to its home papers) a tremendous influx of shipping. The non-partisan observer might readily believe that with the opening of the canal a plume of coal-smoke, flecked with bellying sails, would band the Pacific horizon from Panama to Portland. From New Orleans and the Gulf up-floats a hum of satisfaction and of preparation; the Atlantic Coast and the trans-continental railroads are presumed to be vying at new schedules of transportation; and the American citizen, whether he be producer or consumer, plans (as would again appear) a new system of business and of living.

This is overloading the canal, at the very start of the journey. It is cruelty to animals, if you please to pursue the metaphor. The canal will live up to reasonable expectations; after it is adjusted and has obtained

momentum, it will doubtless live up to now unreasonable expectations. But grant it time to get its breath. A little figuring with pencil and paper should be a wholesome aperient for the present enthusiast who cannot bear disappointment. Yes, even a little quiet reflection, apart from the madding crowd, will convince the most optimistic that the canal, experimental in its conception, must be experimental for some months after its birth.

The canal is big; the industries which it presumably will aid are big; the life which it ought to affect is big: and results must percolate slowly.

So, ladies and gentlemen, don't crowd the canal. It will be a little dazed and awkward at first. Stand back, and give it air; and wait.

EDWIN L. SABIN

TEMPERAMENT

TIME was—and that not many decades ago—when we all had temperament of one sort or another. I might have a gloomy temperament, you a genial one, our friend a phlegmatic one; and the kindest, simplest soul among us was as temperamental as his nervous and complex brother. Nowadays we apply the word to but a single class of individuals, and the test of temperament seems to be that a man shall always do the unexpected, and shall be extremely difficult to live with. And as in Attic days there were but Greeks and barbarians, to-day there are but the temperamental and the commonplace.

Fortunately, an overwhelming proportion of us are commonplace; for no family could, with pride and difficulty, support more than one temperamental member. It is the commonplace who bear the brunt of living, offering themselves as buffers between those favored creatures of temperament and the daily friction of family life. We must needs be tender of them, for it is of them that geniuses are made. "Be careful of Edward's feelings," is the constant warning of an anxious mother. "He has so much temperament, and is so sensitive!" And Edward continues to go about with an ill-balanced chip on his shoulder, which his brothers and sisters dare not knock off, though among themselves they are well aware that knocking about is what he needs above all else.

If every individual of temperament became a full-fledged genius, no amount of forbearance would seem too great a price to pay on the part of the payers. Unfortunately, many fall just enough short of this desired culmination to keep us in doubt all the time. And he who falls short of ripening into the genius he has for years been expected to be is likely not to ripen in any direction, but to harden into a disappointed, ex-

acting creature, needing a still larger and more devoted group of buffers to save his tender mental shins.

At the risk of even losing a few geniuses out of the world, would it not be better to turn over all temperamental children to their commonplace brothers and sisters without reservation? Children are wise creatures, even the dullest of them. Their cruelties are, in the long run, kind. They will replace the aggressive chips upon Edward's shoulder with the burden that belongs there—that of serving as he would be served, and enduring as he would be endured. And if, with this fair play all around, he blossoms into a genius, we are only too thankful to rise up and call him blessed!

HELEN COALE CREW

THE PRIDE OF INFERIORITY

DUGDALE is a fool!" exclaimed a smart young collegian, referring in flippant derision to a less superficially brilliant classmate whose resolute abstention from various forms of dissipation so seductive to the average student was working its natural effect on his scholarship and character. That was thirty years ago, and to-day Dugdale—though that is not his real name—holds a prominent place among the world's workers and thinkers, whereas he of the curling lip and ready gibe has become enveloped in that boundless contiguity of shade which even smart young collegians have been known to enter promptly after graduation. His total eclipse is noted in the alumni register of his college by a significant blank opposite his name—a name without even a local habitation that can be discovered.

The pride of inferiority that delights in belittling the virtue or the talent which one does not possess is no new thing. It has ever been found cheaper in expenditure of energy and grit to assume an air of haughty superiority toward the virtuous or the talented person, than to buckle down to the hateful task of acquiring some degree of the excellence in question. Rather let the odious object of one's dislike and secret envy be summarily consigned to the Ananias Club or the Ahab Association or the Judas Iscariot Society, or whatever more iniquitous confederation of scoundrels there may be.

Amusing are the airs of superiority, often a pitying and patronizing superiority, assumed through ignorance. Darwin's honest and matter-of-fact gardener looked upon his master as a poor, doddering, feeble-foolish sort of recluse, grubbing after worms and spending hours in vacuous contemplation of insignificant weeds and insects. What a blessing it would be, thought the faithful servant, if the poor gentleman could only have some regular occupation! The Göttingen professor

who, on a visit to America, took occasion to express in public his regret that one of his former pupils, of unusual early promise, now the foremost financier of his time and incidentally a munificent patron of art and letters and a generous benefactor to various other good causes, had not remained at Göttingen to succeed him as teacher of mathematics, may fairly be held to have indulged, in an innocent and amiable fashion, in something like the pride of which we are speaking. The glories of a mathematical professorship in the town famous for its university and its sausages not unnaturally shone resplendent to his mind's eye.

A certain great artist's factotum used to move the mirth of visitors to the studio by his manifest sense of the importance of his own services. Washing brushes, cleaning palettes, stretching canvases, adjusting window-shades—these and many other arduous duties were assigned to him, while the artist himself had nothing to do but lay on the colors when everything had been made ready for that simple operation. The maid-servant of a distinguished woman of letters was recently overheard deplored her mistress's habitual disregard of certain usages prescribed by fashion. "Would you believe it?" exclaimed the girl. "She actually started for the opera the other evening with her last winter's hat on her head and a rent in one of her gloves! But what can you expect of a lady that spends all her time just reading and writing books?"

Truly, the comfortable self-complacency of unenlightened inferiority is a thing almost to be envied.

PERCY F. BICKNELL



LIFE SPEAKS

BY EDWARD WILBUR MASON

THEY do me wrong who say that I am pain,
Or grief, or error, or a shadow pale
More aimless than the dust blown on the gale,
And futile as the leaf drenched in the rain.
Nay, nay, not so; I am no trifle vain,
Nor monstrous lie foredoomed at length to fail;
And neither am I but an idle tale,
Nor yet a thing of horror and disdain.
But I am real and beautiful as truth:
Forever am I moved by starry law
Divine as that outshining death and doom.
I am the spirit bright of love and youth—
The Babe born in the manger on the straw,
The God that rose triumphant from the tomb!

THE INVESTOR AND THE GOLD SUPPLY

By Edward Sherwood Mead, Ph.D.

ARTICLE I.

IN a series of articles recently published in *Cotton and Finance*, dealing with the subject of the gold-production and its effect upon the prices of bonds, stocks, and commodities, Mr. Theodore H. Price reaches a conclusion which, if it can be established, is of vital moment to every owner of property in the United States, whether that property be bonds, insurance policies, stocks, or real estate. Briefly stated, this conclusion is, that the increasing production of gold is responsible for the great rise of prices which has been the characteristic feature of the last decade; that this increased production of gold will continue indefinitely, and that the world is facing an economic crisis arising out of the certainty of a persistent depreciation in its standard of value.

This subject has been much discussed in recent years as the steady rise of prices has brought home to every class in the community the importance of the problem presented. The fact of the advance of prices is well established. In 1896 Bradstreet's compilation of the wholesale prices of 106 commodities, including all the leading commodities of commerce, was 59,124; in 1900 this figure had risen to 78,839; in 1905, to 80,987; and in 1912, to 90,362. Specimen increases in particular commodities are even more striking. For example, during this period of seventeen years the price of wheat rose from 64 cents to \$1.22; the price of corn, from 33 cents to 86 cents; the price of beef cattle, from 4.6 cents to 9 cents; eggs, from 12 cents to 20 cents; raw cotton, from 7 cents to 11 cents; anthracite coal, from \$4.25 to \$5.50; and so on, with hardly an exception throughout the entire list. This rise of prices is mainly responsible for the high cost of living. The advance of prices is lessening the purchasing power of gold over the necessities of life. On the other hand, because of the rapid multiplication of companies and the numerous safeguards which experience and information are teaching the bankers to throw about the stocks and bonds which they offer for sale, the competition of corporations for the money of the in-

vestor is growing constantly sharper, and is forcing down the prices of all securities which carry a fixed income, and which have no prospect of sharing in increasing profits. The investment fund, it is true, is steadily increasing, but since the purchasing power of 4 per cent. or five per cent. investment income is so rapidly declining, while at the same time the number of securities offering higher rates of interest is increasing, the natural result is that the investor discriminates against so-called "gilt-edge" bonds. While this depreciation in the price of bonds is apparently an advantage to investors making new purchases, it is threatening heavy losses to the owners of investments already in existence.

Few realize to what an enormous total the securities of bonds and stocks issued by American corporations has mounted. In an article by Francis Lynd Stetson, published in the *Atlantic Monthly* for July of this year, which is quoted by Mr. Price, the following statement is made:

In the fiscal year 1909, according to the report of the Commissioner of Internal Revenue, there were in the United States 282,490 corporations of all kinds, with more than \$84,000,000,000 of stocks and bonds and \$3,125,000,000 of income, paying a Federal tax of about \$27,000,000. For the fiscal year 1910-11 the figures had risen to 270,000 corporations, with more than \$88,000,000,000 of stocks and bonds and \$3,360,000,000 of income, paying a Federal tax of \$29,432,000. As the total wealth of the United States has been estimated at \$125,000,000,000, it would appear that nearly two-thirds of it is held by corporations.

Approximately one-third of this immense mass of securities represents promises to pay gold at various dates in the future, and the value of the commodity which these bonds promise to pay is falling with every advance in the price of commodities. Standard railroad bonds, which fifteen years ago were selling on a 3½ per cent. basis, have now fallen in price until they yield between 4 and 4½ per cent., and the decline is persistent. During the past year the decline in the prices of all kinds of bonds has been noteworthy. Every variety of bonds, railroad, industrial, municipal, has suffered from the depreciation of investments.

On the other hand, this same period which has witnessed such a marked decline in the value of bonds has shown an even more pronounced advance in the prices of stocks. The average price of 36 standard railroad and industrial stocks in 1896 was \$62.50; on May 1, 1912, this average price had almost doubled, rising to \$118. The reason is as follows: A share of stock represents a right to participate in the distribution of profits of the corporation. These profits tend to increase during periods of rising prices because the costs of production and distribution, including as they do a large amount of fixed expense,

as, for example, for interest, depreciation, etc., do not advance to correspond with the increase in the selling-value of the product, so that the margin between cost and selling price, the profit margin, increases when prices rise. Every business which depends upon the sale of a commodity has felt the stimulating influence of rising prices, and even the public-service corporations, whose prices and rates are fixed by law and custom, the railroads, street-railways, gas, electric-light, and water companies, have profited enormously from the immense business which the advance of prices has so greatly assisted to produce. It is no wonder, therefore, that the prices of the stocks which promised their holders participation in this recent flood of industrial profits should have scored such rapid advances.

Here, then, is the situation. The advance of prices shows no sign of stopping. With every increase in commodity prices, the purchasing power of gold declines. All forms of corporate debt, every variety of bonds, represent promises to pay this commodity which is so rapidly depreciating in value. Of necessity, therefore, prices of bonds decline as the prices of commodities advance. On the other hand, rising prices mean rising profits, and the prices of stocks which participate in those rising profits advance far more rapidly than bonds decline.

The conclusion is inevitable, and Mr. Price has no hesitation in emphasizing it in the strongest possible terms; if the advance of prices is to continue, the investor should discriminate against all bonds, mortgages, and notes which are simply contracts to deliver at a future date so many grains of gold, since the purchasing power of that gold is constantly diminishing; and the investor should prefer agricultural, timber, and mineral lands, and corporation stocks. In other words, if the depreciation of gold is to continue, the prices of bonds must persistently depreciate. Any one buying a security carrying a fixed income, whether a bond or a preferred or guaranteed stock, must face the probability of a fall in the price of his investment. On the other hand, those who put their money into property or certificates of interest in corporations which give them the right to participate in the profits of industry, can look forward to a steady appreciation in the money value of their investments.

These statements challenge attention. I have stated them in the baldest possible manner, so that the issues which they raise can be set forth with entire distinctness. If the depreciation of gold continues, bonds must come down and stocks must rise. If a survey of the situation shall lead us to the conclusion that the depreciation of gold will at no distant date work its own remedy in arresting the increase in the production of gold, then these pessimistic utterances can be subject to the moderating influence of a heavy discount.